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HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

New York Fire Department



The history of the New York Fire Department, or the history of any fire department for that matter, in this land of fires, is so full of action, so replete with stirring incident; and is so much a story of heroism and noble sacrifices to duty, that it seems hard for the ordinary writer to do the subject full justice; it would almost seem that it requires a Dickens or a Marryett to chronicle the events in the lives of these men who have played such an important part in the growth and development of this, the greatest commercial centre of the whole United States, for the fireman has at all times followed the most arduous and perilous calling that we have in times of peace, and the New York fireman has faced his full quota of the many unexpected dangers of this hazardous work with an unflinching courage which has called forth the admiration and commendation of the entire world.

It has been well said that to write a history of the Fire Department of New York City is to write a history of the city itself, for from the very first authentic description which we have of the motley collection of crude huts and quaint old Dutch houses perched upon the rocks and cliffs of the lower end of the Island of Manhattan, and known as "Nieuw Amsterdam," to the wonder-city of to-day, whose picturesque skyline marks the entrance to the greatest money-making market of the world, the subject of fire-protection has always received the respectful and careful attention of businessmen and public-officials alike; in fact, it might almost be claimed that the growth of Greater New York, from the primitive Dutch village of 1614 to the Empire City of to-day, can be outlined, step by step, by a corresponding progress in the methods and appliances used in the control and extinguishment of fire, for the expansion of the city and its various industries has been more or less dependent upon the amount of adequate protection it has received from the ravages of this element, the most destructive natural element that modern civilization has had to contend with.

Outside of the commercial value of the fireman and his work, his personal side presents another factor which has had much to do with the growth of the city, for many of the men connected with the volunteer organizations during what might be called the "palmy days" of the New York Fire Department, were identified with its most important business interests, many whose names are synonymous with the financial development of New York as a great business centre, and who represented the very best and foremost families of the old city; and these men, notwithstanding their high social position, were ready and eager at all times to answer the call of the alarm-bell, to sacrifice the comfortable surroundings of their luxuriant home to take their place at the pipe or at the hand-rail of the engine, and to face all manner of personal danger and hardship in an unselfish desire to protect life and property. Surely no history can produce a better example of patriotic devotion to duty than this, and no calling, no matter how hazardous it might be, has brought forth the finer attributes of mankind than has the work of the New York Fire Department.

In considering the history of the fire departments of New York City some degree of attention must necessarily be given to a variety of subjects calculated to illustrate the growth and rapid development of the city. And what a wonderful story that is! What a bewildering panorama it reveals! What changes have to be noted, what pregnant events dwelt upon, and what a wonderful tale of progress is to be unfolded! What alterations,

moreover, have occurred in the locality now occupied by the City of New York since the ship of the first discoverer first entered its quiet waters, or even since the burgomasters and schepens of New Amsterdam surrendered the infant metropolis to its English captors. The cluster of trading houses and rude huts of those days has expanded into the first city of the United States and the third largest in the world, containing over one million and a half of inhabitants, and untold wealth. But marvelous as is this material progress, it is not a whit more so than the story of the New York firemen. This gallant band of citizens has been and still continues to be, the protectors and defenders of the city in all its varied stages—from infancy to manhood. Such changes as have been effected from time to time in the organization of the departments have been brought about to conform to pressing public requirements and to keep pace with the times. Hence it became necessary, at successive periods, to pass a number of municipal ordinances regulating the force and defining their duty. These ordinances contain a pretty comprehensive history of the doings and operations of the firemen of our city.

It is also a noteworthy circumstance that the New World, even in its youth, should have shown its parent how best to guard against the dreadful ravages of fire, and how most scientifically to fight the flames which had been the terror of the Old World.

Europe, with its ages of civilization, and with all its inventive talent, had conceived nothing like the New York fire departments. No transatlantic city could show so devoted a band of men as our volunteers; and to-day our new department stands unrivaled for efficiency. The fame of the paid department has crossed the seas. One of the first sights which visitors to our shores are anxious to see is a fire engine house. An exhibition drill is to them something to be remembered in after years. But the volunteers were the pioneers of the glory of the fire department of New York. It is not too much to say that they built up the present admirable system. They, at least, largely and directly contributed to the perfection of its organization.

Our early firemen were drawn from all ranks in life—the greater part from the most influential classes. Each man felt he had a stake in the city, and readily volunteered his services. Many of them were individually the makers of our history. As a body, they have written one of the most remarkable pages in the history of the country. A volume devoted to these gallant fellows ought, therefore, to be a very interesting one.

As we have briefly intimated, we cannot touch a single company of the fire department, or the briefest period of the annals of that company, without finding ourselves face to face with some interesting bit of the history of New York. The histories of New York are all excellent in their way, but not one, we presume to say, has dealt with its people as this history does. We have walked into the people's houses, so to speak, and have become intimate with them as no ordinary historian, who views men and manners afar off, has yet thought of doing. The result of our industry, of our new departure, appears in every page. The fire department is co-existent with the first Dutch settlement. It makes us acquainted with the British colonists; it carries us into revolutionary times; we are borne along in the telling of its story to those piping times of peace when the only enemy that menaced the Empire City was the fire fiend or the importation of disease; it brings us up to the stirring political times that for thirty years preceded the rebellion, and then it launches us into those years, red with the blood of contending brothers, and wherein those gallant firemen have played a conspicuous part. The experience of the firemen has been of use to the architect and the merchant. Nearly every improvement in the way of building has been the suggestion of men who have seen the evil effects of old methods and styles. They have given a fillip to the inventiveness of the practical engineer, and have helped to improve, in various ways, the useful arts. Thus, it will be seen, that no one who is ambitious to write a true history of the fire department can fail of writing a history of New York City, with all that the name implies.

What, then, would Henry Hudson, the intrepid navigator, when he landed on these shores, have thought of such a story, had the enchanted wand of some wizard transformed the primeval beauties of Manhattan Island into the panoramic picture which it presents to-day, with its vast population, its commercial enterprises, and teeming business life? Surely, the adventurous skipper of the "Vile-boat" or "Half Moon" would have thought it impossible in the period of two and three-quarters of a century such a metamorphosis could have taken place. Well may we believe that he lingered with enthusiastic delight along the picturesque shores of the harbor and the bay, the magnificence of the scenery

being such as to cause him rapturously to exclaim, "It is as beautiful a land as the foot of man can tread upon!"

The site of New York originally presented only a wild and rough aspect, covered with a thick forest, its beach broken and sandy, or rocky and full of inlets forming marshes. These irregularities of surface rendered it all the more desirable for building purposes. The early colonists made but little effort to overcome or remove those rude obstacles of nature in the path of civilized life.

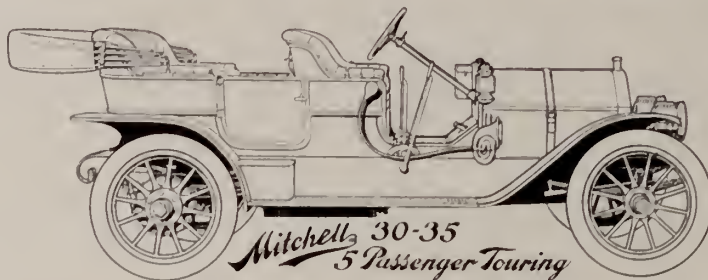
"A more forbidding spot on earth," remarks a local historian, "on which to erect a great city has seldom been seen than was presented in the original ground plan of the city of New York; and in rearing a city on such a foundation the builders have combined the arts of the stonecutters of ancient Petraea and the amphibious labors of the founders of Venice and St. Petersburg."

Permanent and substantial improvements were inaugurated by Governor Stuyvesant. He had been a director of the company's colony at Curacoa, where he lost a leg in an unsuccessful attack on the Portuguese island of Saint Martin. Being obliged to return to Holland for surgical aid, the directors, in recognition of his "Roman courage," sent him to New Netherlands as "redresser-general" of all abuses. He arrived in New Amsterdam in the middle of May, 1647, and found the colony in a "low condition." The aspect of city affairs was certainly not attractive. Fences were straggling, the public ways crooked, and many of the houses, which were chiefly built of wood and thatched with straw, encroached on the lines of the streets.

Fires were of frequent occurrence. The inflammable materials of which the houses were composed, and the insufficient means of extinguishing the flames, led to great anxiety and insecurity, and a corresponding vigilance, or what was deemed vigilance, in the prevention of fire. As the houses of the New Amsterdamers were mostly confined to the southern point of the island, the settlement was well supplied with water with which to do battle in case of emergency. Besides being within easy reach of the waters of the bay, the East and North Rivers, a stream "deep enough for market boats" to ascend flowed in from the bay through the centre of the present Broad Street as far as Exchange Place. Also, there was generally to be found a well or cistern in the garden of each house. But this abundant supply of water was about as practical a factor in the extinguishment of fire as were the "oceans of water" to the thirsty mariners, who, nevertheless, had "not a drop to drink." This paradox will be understood when it is stated that it was a difficult matter for the so-called firemen of this primitive era to utilize these natural sources of supply, and still more difficult of accomplishment to transport the water in sufficient quantities to the scene of the conflagration. The water had to be carried by hand, and "in such emergencies," remarked the Hon. Charles P. Daly, "we may imagine the scene of confusion that must have ensued when tubs, pails, or other means of carrying water, had to be hastily improvised to stay the progress of a fire."

This state of affairs was not destined to last long. It was the first period of fire organization. Other and more potent methods were, however, soon to be inaugurated. In order to introduce these methods, the city fathers of those days, after due deliberation, and as a result of their combined official wisdom, signed the doom of wooden chimneys and thatched roofs, while four fire wardens were appointed to enforce the ordinance. This was the first step in the right direction; other plans were under consideration, and their adoption followed in good time. But as it took a very long while to set the wheels of Dutch official machinery in motion, reforms of every kind were slow and uncertain, and the easygoing burghers were content with one progressive measure at a time. Hence it came to pass that the year 1648 was a memorable one in the annals of New Amsterdam, for it was then that the first fire ordinance was passed. Houses, or log cabins, had been run up with an entire disregard to the alarming possibilities of the ravages of fire. These rude dwellings were, it would seem, specially constructed with a view to their speedily becoming a prey to the devouring element. Wooden chimneys and thatched roofs were certainly not designed to stay the fury of the flames. These naturally inflammable materials were subjected to a double process of seasoning, namely, to heat within and the rays of the sun without. Hence, a spark ignited them and a flame destroyed. It was in this year, then (1648), that a system of fire police was first established, the immediate cause of which was the happening of fires in two places. The preamble to this ordinance declares that "it had come to the knowledge of his excellence, the Director-General, that

Mitchell Bulletin



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certain careless persons were in the habit of neglecting to clean their chimneys by sweeping, and of paying no attention to their fires, whereby lately fires have been discovered in two houses." Mention is made of the fact that the danger of fire is greater as the number of houses increases, particularly as the majority of these houses were built of wood and covered with reeds, while some of the houses, it is pointed out, had wooden chimneys, "which is very dangerous." Therefore it is declared to be advisable and highly necessary to look closely into the matter.

From this time forth it is ordered no wooden or plated chimneys shall be permitted to be built in any houses between the Fort and the Fresh Water, but that those already standing shall be suffered to remain during the good pleasure of the fire wardens. To the end that the foregoing may be duly observed, the following persons were appointed fire wardens: From the Council, the Commissary, Adrian Keyser; and from the Commonalty, Thomas Hall, Martin Krieger, and George Woolsey. They, in their turn, it is stipulated, shall visit all the houses in the city, between the Fort and the Fresh Water,



SCENE AT A FIRE, YEAR 1730

and shall inspect the chimneys whether they be kept clean by sweeping, and as often as any shall be discovered to be foul they shall condemn them, and the owners shall immediately, without any gainsaying, pay the fine of three guilders for each chimney thus condemned—to be appropriated to the maintenance of fire ladders, hooks, and buckets, which shall be provided and procured the first opportunity. And in case the houses of any persons shall be burned, or be on fire, either through his own negligence or his own fire, he shall be mulcted in the penalty of twenty-five guilders, to be appropriated as aforesaid.

The appointment of these fire wardens may be regarded as the initiatory effort to establish a system of protection against fire. They are the first fire functionaries, and as such it is interesting to learn something about them beyond their names. Martin Krieger was the proprietor of a famous tavern opposite Bowling Green. At a later period, when the city was incorporated and a municipal government formed, he was a member of Governor Stuyvesant's council, and from this time until the capture of the city by the

British he filled many important offices. Thomas Hall was an Englishman. Having been captured by the Dutch and paroled, he took up his residence among his friendly captors, and in time became a man of wealth, filling many public offices. He owned a large farm in the vicinity of Spruce and Beekman Streets. This farm in later years passed into the hands of William Beekman, the ancestor of the Beekman family. Adrian Keyser was officially connected with the Dutch West India Company, by whom the New Netherlands was founded. He was afterwards a member of the Executive Council. George Woolsey, like Thomas Hall, was an Englishman. He came out as the agent of Isaac Allerton, a leading Dutch trader. The descendants of these men are, to this day, honored residents of this city.

Toward the latter part of the year 1657 the need of regular leather fire buckets was much felt. None existed in the colony, and the thought of manufacturing them themselves was too visionary and impracticable to be entertained just then. As the Fatherland was depended upon to furnish nearly all the artificial necessities of life, it was decided to send to Holland for the buckets, as specified in the following resolution:

WHEREAS, in all well-regulated cities it is customary that fire buckets, ladders, and hooks are in readiness at the corners of the streets and in public houses, for time of need: which is the more necessary in this city on account of the small number of stone houses and the many wooden houses here; therefore, the Director-General and Councillors do authorize the Burgomasters and Schepens of this city, either personally or through their treasurer, to demand immediately for every house, whether small or great, one beaver or eight guilders in sewant; and to procure from Fatherland, out of the sum collected in this manner, two hundred and fifty leathern fire buckets, and also to have made some fire ladders and fire hooks; and to maintain this establishment, they may yearly demand for every chimney one guilder.

This tax was promptly collected by the city authorities, but the much coveted fire buckets were still beyond the reach of the city fathers. The resolution, quoted above, looking to the mother country for their procurement was reconsidered, as it would take a long time before they could have reached this country. So, after waiting some months, it was decided to invoke the aid of the city shoemakers. But the shoemakers of those primitive days lacked confidence in their ability to perform the task assigned them. Four out of the seven Knights of St. Crispin responded to the call to meet the city fathers in solemn and serious conclave. The date of the meeting was the first of August, 1658. The views of each shoemaker was solicited. The first declined "the arduous undertaking," the second declared he had no material; the third, more enterprising, proposed to contract to make one hundred buckets for the consideration of six guilders and two stuyvers each (about two dollars and fifty cents), the fourth, after much persuasion, consented to make the remaining fifty upon the same terms.

These are the terms agreed upon:

Remout Remoutzen agrees to make the said buckets all out of tanned leather, and to do all that is necessary to finish them in the completest manner for the price of six guilders two stuyvers each (about two dollars and fifty cents each), half sewant, half beavers, a fourth part of the half beavers to be "passable," three-fourths whole beavers: on these conditions he is to make one hundred buckets, which he promises to do between this and All-Saints' Day. Adrian Van Lair, on the same terms, to make fifty buckets.

But Rome was not built in a day, and at the end of six months from the date of the above agreement, that is to say, on the twentieth of January following, the one hundred and fifty leather buckets were delivered at the Stadt House, where fifty of the number were deposited.

The burning of a small log house on a bluff overlooking the bay, where Castle Garden now stands, led to the establishment of the first fire company in 1658. This organization, disrespectfully dubbed the "Prowlers," consisted of eight men, furnished with two hundred and fifty buckets, hooks, and small ladders, and each of its members was expected to walk the streets from nine o'clock at night until morning drum-beat, watching for fire while the town slumbered.

This company was organized by ambitious young men, and was known as the "rattle-watch." It was soon increased to fifty members, and did duty from nine p. m. until sunrise, all the citizens who could be roused from their beds assisting in case of fire. One of the first fire buckets is still preserved by James Van Amburgh of Westchester County.

whose ancestor was one of these early firemen. The first serious fire had occurred the year before, in 1657, when Sam Baxter's house caught fire—from a blazing log which rolled out of the fireplace during the night—and was completely consumed. It was regarded as the handsomest dwelling in the settlement of the early Dutch, and its destruction gave the needed impetus for the organization of a fire company. Even the veteran firemen who still survive would laugh if they would read the manner in which these early fire laddies undertook to provide against conflagrations. One of the rules was that each citizen of New Amsterdam was required to fill three buckets with water after sunset, and place them on his doorstep for the use of the fire patrol in case of need. Another Dutch ordinance directed that ten buckets should be filled with water at the town pump, "wen ye sun go down," and these were to be left in a rack provided for that purpose, so that the members of the "rattle-watch" could readily lay their hands upon them, "if ye fyver does go further yan ye efforts of ye men and call for water."

When the fire was extinguished, the buckets of the citizens that had been used were thrown in a great heap on the common, and the town-crier, mounting a barrel, shouted lustily for each bucket proprietor to come and claim his own. As the stirring nasal cry,

"Hear ye! O! I pray ye,
Lord masters claim your buckets,"

penetrated to the suburbs of the town, boys ran from all directions, and fought savagely on the grass at the crier's feet, to see who should carry home the buckets belonging to rich men, knowing that the reward would be a cake or a glass of wine, or a small coin.

The prevention of fire was a subject which caused much anxiety and unremitting attention. To see that the ordinances were carried out, frequent examinations were made of the chimneys and houses. These precautions caused much annoyance to the order-loving Dutch matrons, who, doubtless, regarded such visits as an intrusion. The worthy fire functionaries found their zeal but ill-requitted. They were often insulted and abused, but they bore it all with true Dutch fortitude, until their female persecutors called them "chimney sweeps." This was the crowning indignity, and not to be borne. Retaliatory measures were adopted. The *goede vrouws* were summoned before the magistrates and fined for their discourteous conduct. This, it seems, did not mend matters, for the office of fire warden fell into disuse, and the ordinance became a dead letter.

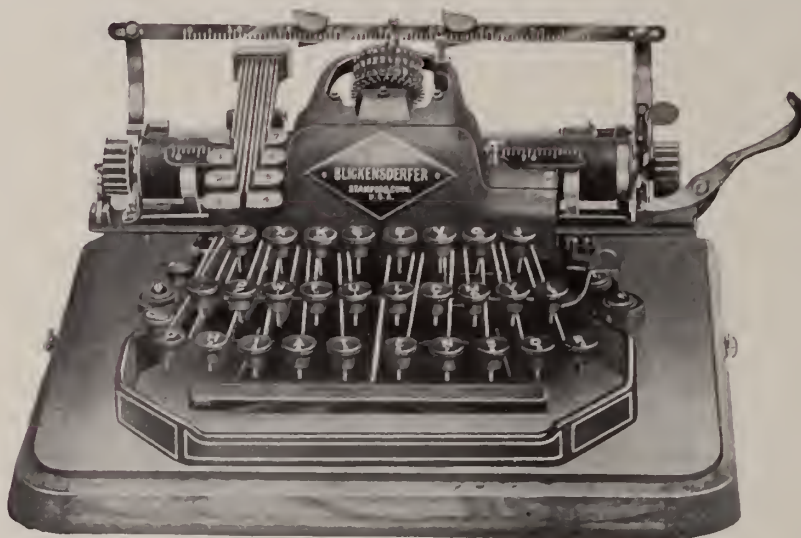
On the thirteenth of January, 1674, there was a meeting of civic officials in regard to fire matters. There were present Captain Kynff, on behalf of the Honorable Governor; Antony De Mill, schout; Johannes De Peyster, Johannes Van Brough, and Aegidius Luyck, burgomasters; William Beekman, Jeronimus Ebbingh, Jacob Kipp, Lourens Van der Speigill, and Guilame Ver Planck, schepens. At this meeting the fire wardens presented a written report of the number of fire buckets and other implements "found by them to be provided." They made a demand for an additional supply of the implements, "requesting that this court will be pleased to order that such fire hooks and ladders as are necessary may be made."

The importance of taking precautions against the happening conflagrations was recognized in many ways, as is evidenced by the ordinances framed and the measures adopted from time to time. On the sixteenth of February, 1676, all persons having any of the city's ladders, buckets or hooks, in their custody, were called upon to immediately deliver them to the mayor. It was also ordered that wells be dug, as follows: "One in the street over against the house of Fowliff Johnson's, the butcher; another in the Broadway against Mr. Vandicke's; another in the street over against Derrick Smith's; another in the street over against the house of John Cavildore; another in the yard or rear of the Cytie Hall; another in the street over against Cornelius Van Borsum's." On the twenty-eighth of February there was published a list of persons that had "noe chimneys, or not fitt to keepe fire in," and an order was issued by the mayor and aldermen calling upon these delinquents to cause suitable chimneys to be built without delay. In January of the following year John Dooly and John Vorrickson Meyer were appointed to inspect all the chimneys and fire hearths in the city, and on the fifteenth of March, 1683, a law was enacted empowering the appointment of viewers and searchers (fire wardens) of chimneys and fire hearths, to report to the mayor and aldermen, who could impose a fine not exceeding twenty shillings for each default; prohibiting the laying of straw, hay, or other combustible matter in their dwelling houses, or places adjoining the same, "but at a distance from their houses and the street; and providing for hooks, ladders and buckets, to be kept

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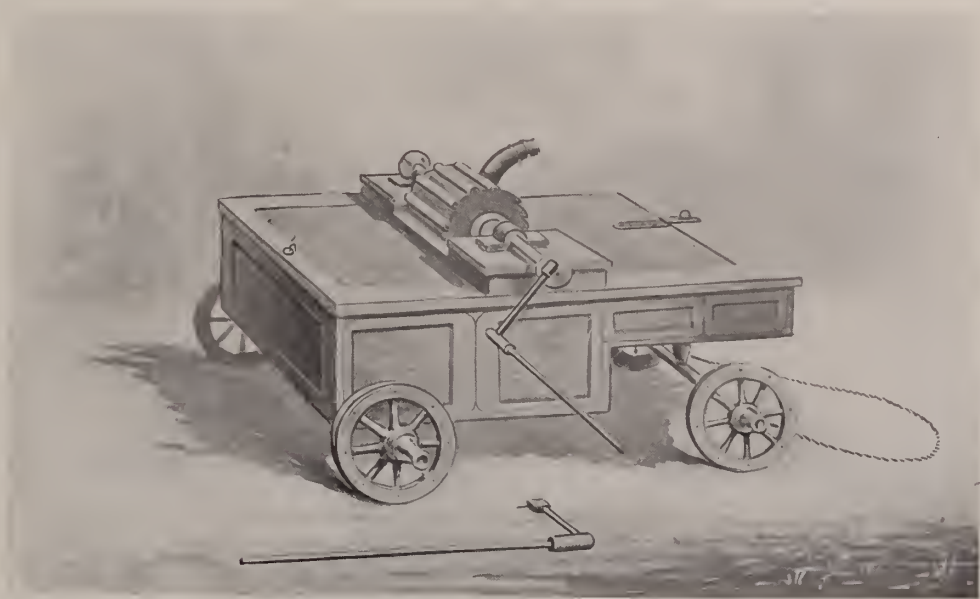
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in convenient places;" and, further, that "if any person should suffer his chimney to be on fire he should pay the sum of fifteen shillings."

A public chimney-sweep was appointed for the city (1685), who was to cry his approach through the public streets, and who probably originated the whoop peculiar to his vocation. His rates were fixed by law at a shilling and eighteen pence per chimney, according to the height of the house.

Great damage seems to have been done by fire in January 1686. The Common Council, at a meeting held on February 28 of that year, referred to the absence of means for the extinguishment of fires, and it was ordered that every inhabitant whose dwelling-house had two chimneys should provide one bucket, and for more than two chimneys, two buckets; that all brewers possess five buckets apiece, and all bakers three, said buckets to be provided before September 25th ensuing, under a penalty of neglect of five shillings for each bucket. Five years later, on the twenty-fifth of November, 1691, this order was re-enacted. But there were added the stipulations that the buckets should be provided by the occupants, and the cost thereof allowed them by the landlord out of the rent, and "every man to marke the bucketts with the letters of his landlord's name, upon



FIRE APPARATUS USED DURING YEAR 1760

forfeiture of six shillings, for the use of the city to be paid by the tenant on default," etc. The mayor was empowered to acquit "poore people" of the penalty.

At the same time, Derrick Vandeburgh, John Rose, Snert Olphite, and Garret Rose were appointed to "goe round the towne and view each fireplace and chimney, that they be sufficient and clean swept," with the penalty of three shillings and sixpence to each inhabitant for each defect.

A fire occurred in that part of the town called the "Fly" in February, 1692, at which several buckets were lost. Complaints reached the mayor that people of thievish propensities had appropriated them, whereupon His Honor issued an order directing the crier to give notice around the city that the stolen buckets be taken to the mayor immediately so that they might be restored to their owners. Other appliances besides buckets had been thought of. Two years before the fire in the "Fly," five "brant masters" (fire wardens) had been appointed on January 4, 1690. These fire wardens were: Peter Adolf, Derck van der Brincke, Derck ten Eyk, Jacob Borlen, and Tobeyas Stoutenburgh, and it has been ordered that five ladders be made and provided for service at fires, with sufficient hooks therefor.

Additional precautions were now taken against occurrence of fires. In 1697, the

aldermen and assistant aldermen were authorized to appoint two persons as fire wardens in every ward. The penalty of three shillings was imposed for the neglect to remedy defective flues and hearths—one-half to the city and one-half to the wardens—and if a chimney should take fire after notice had been given to clean it, the occupant was mulcted in the sum of forty shillings. This is the first record of a paid fire department in the city of New York. The system had advanced beyond the limits of "viewers" and "over-seers," and had reached a point where something like organization was effected, and arrangements completed for paying, fining and discharging the men, who were obliged to view the chimneys and hearths once a week. In short, a more prompt and systematic performance of duty was required.

The practice of having every house supplied with fire buckets now became general, and was continued long after the introduction of the fire engines. The manner in which an alarm was given in the night time is graphically told by the Hon. Charles P. Daly: "If a fire broke out at night," he says, "the watchman gave the alarm with his rattle, and knocked at the doors of the houses, with the cry, 'Throw out your buckets!' the alarm being further spread by the ringing of the bell at the fort and by the bells in the steeples of the different churches. When the inmates of a house were aroused, the first act was to throw out the buckets in the street, which were of sole leather, holding about three gallons, and were also hung in the passage close to the street door. They were picked by those who were hastening to the fire, it being the general custom for nearly every householder to hurry to the fire—whether by day or by night—and render his assistance. As soon as possible two lines were formed from the fire to the nearest well pump, and when they gave out the line was carried to the next one or to the river. The one line passed up the full buckets, and the empty ones were passed down the other line. No one was permitted to break through those lines, and if any one attempted to do so, and would not fall in and lend a helping hand, a bucket of water or several were instantly thrown over him. Each bucket was marked with the name or number of the owner, and, when the fire was over, they were all collected together and taken in a cart, belonging to the city, to the City Hall. A bellman then went round to announce that the buckets were ready for delivery, when each householder sent for his bucket, and, when recovered, hung it up in the allotted place, ready for the next emergency."

The first attempt to light the streets was made in November, 1697.

During this period (1697) a night watch was established, composed of "four good and honest inhabitants of the city, whose duty it shall be to watch in the night time, from the hour of nine in the evening till break of day, until the twenty-fifth of March next; and to go round the city, each hour of the night, with a bell, and there to proclaim the season of the weather and the hour of the night."

Four able-bodied men were appointed watch and bellmen for the city in 1702, from November 1 to April 1 following. They were to go, every hour of the night, through the several streets, publishing the time of the night; to apprehend disturbers of the peace etc., and to see that no damage be done by fires. A lantern, bell and hour-glass were provided for them by the city.

The Common Council, on the sixth of November, 1703, ordered that the aldermen of each ward should command the respective constables therein to make a house to house inspection, to ascertain whether the number of fire buckets required by law were kept on hand, and to present the delinquents for prosecution.

New and more stringent regulations were now passed in respect to fires; the fire wardens were directed to keep strict watch of all hearths and chimneys within the city, and to see that the fire buckets were hung up in their right places throughout the wards, and two hooks and eight ladders were purchased at the public expense for the use of the fire department.

This system prevailed, with slight modifications, until the introduction of the hand engines from London.

A law for the better prevention of fire was published at the City Hall on November 8, 1731. After the customary ringing of three bells, and a proclamation had been made for silence, it provided for the appointing of "viewers of chimneys and hearths," to make monthly inspections; the fine of three shillings for neglecting the directions of the fire wardens, re-enacting the fine of forty shillings for chimneys on fire, and establishing a like fine for "viewers" who should refuse to serve, and a fine of six shillings for neglect

of duty; providing for the obtainment of hooks, ladders and buckets, and fire engines, to be kept in convenient places; for leather buckets to be kept in every house; a penalty for not possessing the required number of buckets, and a fine for detaining other men's buckets.

The year 1731 was the beginning of a memorable epoch in the history of New York and its famous fire department. Then came into use the new hand fire engines. Then was laid the foundation of that gallant, emulous, and self-sacrificing body of volunteers, the record of whose deeds will read to posterity like an old romance. Just as the chronicles of the doughty Crusaders touch the hearts of the youth of to-day, so will the history of the achievements of the old volunteer companies of the Empire City fire the bosoms of generations to come. This year saw the nucleus of a fine body of athletic men, ever ready to risk life and limb for the public weal. Soon were to be identified with some primitive engines, names that will live forever in our history, such as the Harpers, the Macys, the Townsends, the Goelets, William H. Appleton, Zophar Mills, George T. Hope, Marshall O. Roberts, and James Kelly. It was the beginning of the era of the clattering machine, with its rushing, shouting, bold and dashing attendants, as ready to fight their fellows for the place of honor in the hour of danger as the devouring flames themselves.

On the sixth of May, 1731, the city authorities passed the following resolution:

Resolved, With all convenient speed to procure two complete fire engines, with suction and materials thereto belonging, for the public service; that the sizes thereof be of the fourth and sixth sizes of Mr. Newsham's fire engines, and that Mr. Mayor, Alderman Cruger, Alderman Rutgers, and Alderman Roosevelt, or any of them, be a committee to agree with some proper merchant to send to London for the same by the first convenience, and report upon what terms the said fire engines, etc., will be delivered to this corporation.

The committee named reported at a meeting of the Common Council, held on June 12, 1731, that they had proposed to Messrs. Stephen De Lancey and John Moore, merchants, to send for two fire engines to London, by the ship *Beaver*, of Mr. Newsham's new invention of the fourth and sixth sizes, with suction, leathern pipes, and caps, and other materials; and that those gentlemen had undertaken to purchase and deliver them to the corporation at an advance of one hundred and twenty per cent. on the foot of the invoice (exclusive of insurance and commissions), and that the money should be paid for the same within nine months after the delivery of the same.

Towards the close of November, 1731, the good ship *Beaver* was sighted off port, and on December 1 workmen commenced to fit up "a convenient room" in the new City Hall for securing the fire engines, and on the fourteenth, the engines being in the meanwhile landed and "secured," a committee was appointed to have them cleaned and the leathers oiled and put into boxes ready for immediate use.

"The importation of the city of these fire engines," says the Hon. Charles P. Daly in his valuable treatise on "The Origin and History of the New York Fire Department," "was an incident of no ordinary importance. There was no subject upon which at that time the inhabitants of the city felt a deeper interest than the most effectual means of distinguishing fires, for the loss of property by conflagration was a calamity to which the city from its first settlement had been particularly exposed."

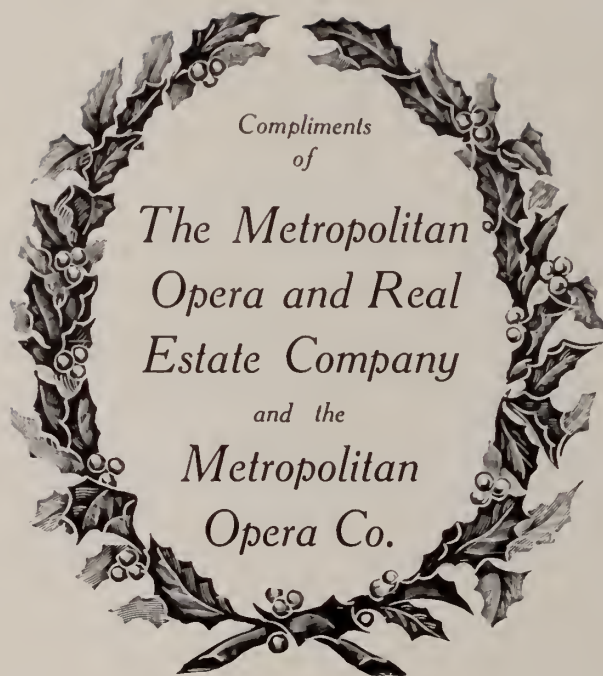
These engines were designated as No. 1 and No. 2. They were located in separate sheds, in the rear of the City Hall, No. 1 on the east side of the building, and No. 2 on the west side, facing King Street, now Nassau.

The aldermen and the assistant aldermen were in charge of the apparatus in those days, and they were called overseers. The mayor and aldermen took charge at fires, the public at large being compelled to do fire duty. No one over twenty-one years of age was exempt, and for a refusal to do duty they were liable to a fine of one pound or five dollars.

When the two engines were received by the city from London, they were a great curiosity, the people being fully as much interested as when silver coinages were brought out.

Peter Rutger, a brewer and an assistant alderman of the North Ward, was the first man that ever had charge of a fire engine on Manhattan Island, and John Rosevelt, a merchant, was the second.

In 1677 the city contained three hundred and sixty-eight houses; in 1693 the num-





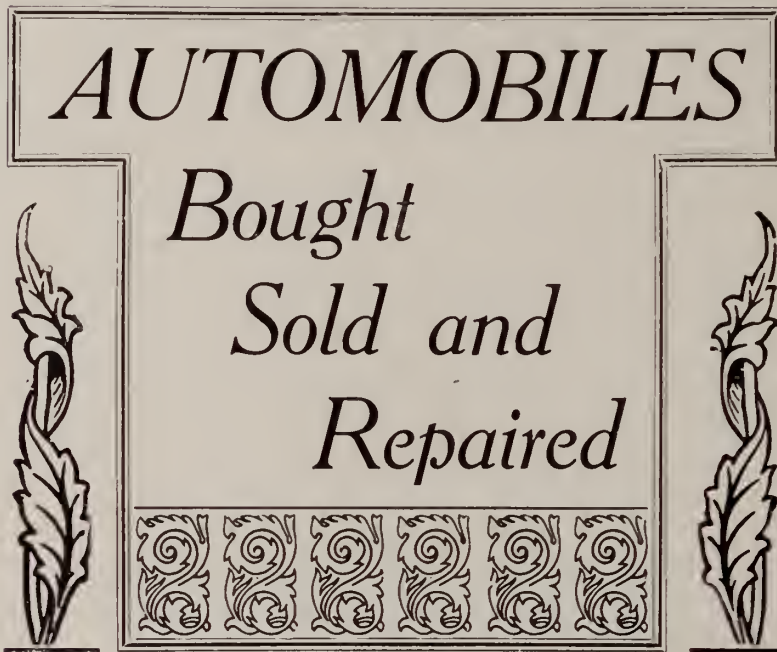
Fire Engine presented to the Town of Shelburne, Nova Scotia, by King George in 1774. Now in possession of the Fire Department of Shelburne. This photograph was taken in 1908 and sent to Col. Crosby by J. W. Oates, Chief of Fire Department. Presented to Edward F. Croker, Chief of New York Fire Department, by Col. John Schuyler Crosby

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ber was five hundred and ninety-four; in 1696 it was put down at seven hundred and fifty; and when the two fire engines arrived from London, the population of the city was eight thousand six hundred and twenty-eight, and the number of houses was about one thousand two hundred.

Up to this time, as has been shown, the only means of extinguishing fire was the carrying of water in buckets and the use of ladders and fire hooks. These primitive appliances, however, were more effective instruments as fire apparatus than might be inferred in view of the vast and ingenious mechanical appliances and machinery in use at the present day. Architecture had not then, as now, taken the same ambitious flight. The buildings originally were chiefly of one story, and few houses exceeded two stories. The first three story house put up in the city was erected in the year 1696, in Pearl Street, opposite Cedar Street, and was built by a member of the Depeyster family.

The experience of the past had doubtless pointed out the necessity of putting the engines in charge of some competent and skillful person, and, accordingly, on the twenty-first of January following, the mayor and four aldermen were appointed a committee to employ workmen to put them in good order, and to engage persons by the year to keep them in repair and to work them when necessary. Anthony Lamb was accordingly appointed overseer, or, as the office was afterwards called, chief engineer, at a salary of twelve dollars a year, and he and the persons employed by the year under him may be said to have been the first regularly organized fire department. The sheds fitted up for these two engines in the rear of the City Hall would not seem to have been sufficiently commodious, and, accordingly, in 1736, the corporation ordered a convenient house to be built "contiguous to the watch house in Broad Street, for their security and well keeping." This building, the first engine house in the city, was in the middle of Broad Street, half way between Wall Street and Exchange Place. The watch house stood at the head of Broad Street, and immediately behind it, in the middle of the street, this engine house was built. Lamb held the office of chief engineer until 1736, when he was succeeded by Jacob Turk, a gunsmith, who appears to have been a man of considerable skill and ingenuity.

Fire engines were built and for sale in this city six years after their first introduction, as will be seen by the following advertisement from the *New York Gazette*, May 9, 1737:

"A fire engine, that will deliver two hogsheads of water in a minute, in a continual stream, is to be sold by William Lindsay, the maker thereof. Inquire at Fighting Cocks, next door to the Exchange Coffee House, New York."

The engines were being constantly changed from one ward to another to please the aldermen. If an alderman or an assistant could get an engine located in his ward, it was a big thing, and the friends of the alderman would freely build a house to put it in.

Several attempts were made to build engines after those brought over from London, but most all failed who attempted it. One Bartholomew Weldern built two, neither one of which would work. The price allowed for building an engine in those days was £50.

Thomas Lote was the first man who ever built an engine in this country that was used. It was known as No. 3, and on its completion was located adjoining "Kalch-Hook Pond."

In December, 1737, the General Assembly of the colony passed an act enabling the corporation to appoint not more than forty-two able, discreet, sober men as firemen; an equal number to be appointed out of the six several wards on the south side of Fresh Water. An enumeration of the trades of twenty-eight will be interesting and is as follows: Blacksmiths, 4; blockmaker, 1; cutter, 1; gunsmiths, 2; carpenters, 5; bricklayers, 2; ropemaker, 1; carmen, 2; coopers, 4; bakers, 2; cordwainers, 4.

The volunteer fire department, so established, lasted for one hundred and twenty-seven years. A high compliment, and one that no doubt was deserved, was paid to the city's firemen in the preamble to this act, in these words: "The inhabitants of the city of New York of all degrees, have very justly acquired the reputation of being singularly and remarkably famous for their diligence and services in cases of fires," and it was, doubtless, this fact that led to the institution of the voluntary system. This act recites, furthermore, that the firemen "have, at very great charge and expense, supplied themselves, and are provided with two fire engines and various sorts of poles, hooks, iron chains, ropes, ladders and several other tools and instruments for the extinguishment of fires. They were to manage and care for the fire apparatus," to be "called the firemen of the city of

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New York," and be ready for service "by night as well as by day." To "compel and oblige them" to be "diligent, industrious and vigilant," the Common Council were empowered to remove any of them and put others in their place, and, as an inducement to fill up the ranks, the firemen so appointed were "freed, exempted and privileged from the several offices of constable and surveyor of the highways, and of and from the being put into or serving upon any juries or inquest, and of and from being compellable to serve in the militia, or any of the independent companies of or in the said city, or any or either of them, except in cases of invasion, or other imminent danger." It was ordained likewise that the firemen enjoy the privileges given by the act of Assembly, on condition of their subjecting themselves to certain cited rules and regulations, of which these are an abstract:

Upon notice of the happening of a fire, they are to take the engines and assist in its extinguishment, and afterwards to wash the engines and preserve them in good order.

If absent from a fire without reasonable cause, to forfeit twelve shillings.

Once in each month to exercise the engines, so as to keep them in good order.

For any neglect of his duty, a fireman might be removed.

Forfeitures were to be recovered before the mayor, recorder, or any alderman.

On December 1, 1741, additional firemen were appointed.

In this year also a committee of the Common Council was appointed "to inspect the ladders, hooks, etc., and to cause one hundred leather buckets to be made."

It was decided, in February, 1749, to build an engine house in Hanover Square, and to procure one hundred new fire buckets. Three years later in May, the watch prison was designated a house for a fire engine, and six small speaking trumpets were purchased.

In addition to the law for the better preventing of fire which was ordained on the eighth of November, 1756, an ordinance was passed in November, 1757, decreeing that no person should have, keep or put any hay or straw in barracks or piles in his yard or garden, or in any other place, to the southward of Fresh Water, except in close buildings erected for the purpose; and that no person should have, keep or put any hay or straw in any house, stable or building within the same limits, that should be within ten feet of any chimney, hearth, or fireplace, or place for keeping ashes, under the penalty of twenty shillings for every offense, one half of which should be recovered for the church wardens for the use of the poor of the city, and the other half for the person who should prosecute the complaint. The new barracks adjacent to the workhouse being unprotected, a fire engine and fifty buckets were sent there. In order to provide additional and more powerful fire engines, it was decided at a meeting of the Common Council, held on June 20, that the remainder of the money acquired by the sale of the city's fire-arms to General Abercrombie, be sent to England for the purchase there of one large fire engine, one small one, and two hand engines, with some buckets, etc.

In July, Jacobus Stoutenburgh was appointed overseer of the fire engines and appurtenances, agreeing to take care of them and keep them in good order for the sum of thirty pounds per year. The following year Mr. Stoutenburgh was known as the engineer of the department, having as assistants Samuel Bell and Jasper Ten Brook. The working force consisted of twelve men for each of the six wards.

No attempt was made to light the streets by public authority until the year 1762, excepting a temporary ordinance in the latter part of the previous century, requiring the occupants of every tenth house to hang out a lantern upon a pole. An act of Assembly was passed in the above year giving the corporation authority to provide means for lighting the city. In the same year the first posts and lamps were purchased. In 1770 a contract was made with J. Stoutenburgh for supplying oil and lighting the city lamps, for the sum of seven hundred and sixty dollars. In 1774 the city employed sixteen lamplighters. This system of lighting the city remained substantially the same until the contract with the New York Gaslight Company, in 1823, by which certain parts of the city were to be lighted with gas.

In 1767 it was directed that all the roofs in the city should be covered with slate or tiles. For some years, however, tiles alone were used, the first building roofed with slate being, it is said, the City Hotel, in Broadway, erected in 1794.

The number of firemen in the city had been increased by February 1, 1769, to one hundred and thirty.

The law prescribing a penalty for permitting chimneys to take fire through neglect to keep them clean became practically obsolete because of the unwillingness of neighbors to turn informers and help to prosecute for violations of it. It was therefore deemed necessary in November, 1771, to appoint Johannis Myer to perform that disagreeable but necessary service; and the penalties were to be devoted to a firemen's fund for the purchase of material required by them in the prosecution of their duties. The engineer in this year, for "maintaining" ten engines and for his own salary, drew the sum of thirty-three pounds and six shillings. The following year a third assistant engineer was appointed, and three additional engines were purchased.

Up to 1776 there were but seven engines and two bucket and ladders, or trucks, although there were building at the time one for No. 8. During the early part of this year the whole force of the Fire Department, consisting of a little over one hundred and seventy, formed themselves into a home guard, with Jacob Stoutenburgh as chief, but virtually under command of General Washington.

Two terrible conflagrations added to the measure of distress and ruin. Hardly had the British troops taken possession, ere (on the twenty-first of September, 1776,) a disastrous fire, breaking out in a small wooden house on the wharf near Whitehall, occupied by dissolute characters, spread to the northward, and consumed the entire city westward of Broadway to the very northernmost limit. In this terrible calamity, which owed its extent to the desertion of the city and the terror of the few remaining inhabitants, four hundred and ninety-three houses were destroyed, including old Trinity and the Lutheran Church. Another destructive fire broke out on Cruger's wharf on the third of August, 1778, and burned about fifty-four houses.

The cause of so many houses being burned was attributed to the military taking the directions of the fire from the firemen. The commander-in-chief, to whom complaint was made by the citizens, gave orders that in future no military man should interfere with any fire that might happen within the city.

These fires occurred while the British held possession of the city, and excited a fear at the time that the "American Rebels" had purposed to oust them by their own sacrifices, like another Moscow. It was, however, established that they were the result of accident and not of design.

After the great fire of 1776, Major-General James Robertson issued the following proclamation:

WHEREAS, There is ground to believe that the Rebels, not satisfied with the Destruction of Part of the City, entertain Designs of burning the Rest. And it is thought that a Watch to inspect all the Parts of the City to apprehend Incendiaries and to stifle Fires before they rise to a dangerous Height might be necessary and proper means to prevent such a calamity. Many of the principal inhabitants have applied to me to form such a Watch and have all offered to watch in person, etc.

A number of citizens formed themselves into companies, in January of 1781, calling themselves by the names of the Friendly Union, Hand-in-Hand, and Heart-in-Hand Fire Companies. Their object was to undertake every service in their power, in case of fire, by removing and securing the effects of such of their fellow citizens whose situation, at such time, should require their attention. In order to be distinguished, they wore round hats with black brims and white crowns. They were exempted from handling buckets, or assisting in working the engines.

The Department (up to 1776) consisted as follows:

Engine Company No. 1—Location, rear of City Hall.

Engine Company No. 2—Rear of City Hall.

Engine Company No. 3—At Calch-Hook Pond.

Engine Company No. 4—Broadway and a lane leading down to Jansen's windmill, midway between Little Queen and Fair streets.

Engine Company No. 5—On "Smit Valley," now Pearl street.

Engine Company No. 6—Crown street, near King, now Nassau.

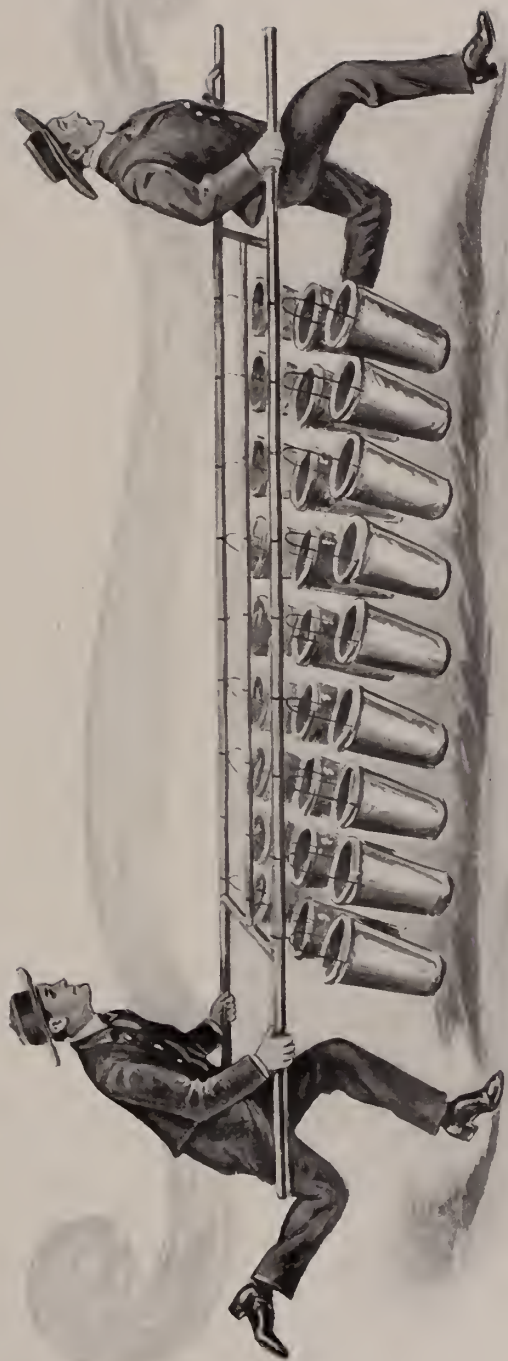
Engine Company No. 7—Duke street, leading down to Terry, now Stone.

Engine Company No. 8—At the Tar Pits, foot of now Maiden Lane.

Truck Company No. 2—Fair, near King street.

Truck Company No. 2—S. E. of the Battery, adjoining the Basin.

During the war the department was completely demoralized, but two engines hav-



METHOD OF CARRYING FIRE BUCKETS, 1790

ing survived. Most of the members were killed, and when the British evacuated the city only one of the engines left would work.

Numerous fire buckets had disappeared from time to time—expropriated or irremediably damaged. So great had the deficiency thus created become, by the commencement of 1784, that the Common Council appointed a committee to ascertain the number wanting, and to make contracts for new buckets.

In May, 1785, a fire engine was purchased of Richard Deane for the sum of forty pounds sterling. In July of that year the French church was burnt. In October, as "the season in which fires most frequently happen was approaching," the law for the better preventing of fire was published in the newspapers of the city, so that no one could plead ignorance.

Although no effort seems to have been made by State laws prior to 1787 to organize any force of men specially charged with the extinguishment of fires in this city, it is worthy of note that two previous enactments had been made looking toward the prevention of fires, one in 1785, and the other the following year. The first of these laws was aimed at "the pernicious practice of firing guns, pistols, rockets, squibs, and other fireworks, on the eve of the last day of December, and the first and second days of January," and provided for a fine of forty shillings for the offense of firing off any gun, etc., within a quarter of a mile of any building on the days named. In the event of the fine not being paid, then the offender went to jail, "there to remain without bail or mainprize for the space of one month."

The other, passed in 1787, was directed against "the storing of pitch, tar, turpentine, rosin, linseed oil, or shingles," as well as against the firing off of guns, pistols, etc. It prohibited the storing of any of the substances named in any place "south of fresh water in said city," under a penalty of ten pounds. But any ship chandler was allowed to have "near his door in the open street" not to exceed twenty barrels at any one time, "in order the more readily to supply the merchant ships, and others who may have occasion for small quantities of such commodities." Any person discharging any firearms or fireworks "on any lane, street, or ally, garden, or other enclosure, or in any other place where persons usually walk 'south of fresh water,'" was liable to a penalty of twenty shillings, or to be imprisoned for ten days. If the offender were a slave, it was provided that he was to be "publicly whipped on the naked back as many times as the justice shall prescribe, not exceeding thirty-nine."

On March 15, 1787, the first act regulating the keeping and storing of gunpowder was passed. By this law, any gunpowder in greater quantity than twenty-eight pounds, found by any fireman outside of the powder magazine and within one mile of the City Hall, was forfeited to the use of such fireman, without the formality of any legal process whatever.

On November 1, 1780, the Hand-in-Hand Fire Company was organized. Certain rules and regulations were at various times agreed on, and adopted at a meeting held at the Coffee House on November 20, 1788. "The utility of associations for the purpose of averting as much as possible the ruinous consequences which may occasionally happen by fire," the preamble recites, "induced a number of individuals to form themselves into select companies, with the laudable view of affording their particular aid to each other, and to the community at large." Under this impression the society was formed. Among the articles of association was one requiring that each member should provide himself with two bags, consisting of three-and-a-half-yards raven's duck (with proper strings), marked with the owner's name at length, and "H. H.," the initials of the company; also a round hat, the crown to be painted white, and thereon the letters "H. H." painted black, as large as the crown would permit of: which hat should be considered as the badge of distinction of the company in case of fire. Another article provided that there should be a watchword given by the president or vice-president, in order to prevent deception from intruders at the removal of effects in case of fire; and the watchword was to be demanded by one of the members, who should be placed as sentinel at the house or store in danger.

The earliest State law providing for the protection of the city from the ravages of fire, and upon which is founded all subsequent legislation relating to the appointment and equipment of firemen, is that passed on March 19, 1787, entitled "an act for the better extinguishment of fires in the city of New York." By that act the Common Council was

authorized and required to appoint "a sufficient number of strong, able, discreet, honest, and sober men, willing to accept, not exceeding three hundred in number of the inhabitants, being freeholders or freemen of said city, to have the care, management, working and using the fire engines and the other tools and instruments, now provided or hereafter to be provided for extinguishing fires, * * * which persons shall be called the Firemen of the City of New York; and who, with the engineers of the same city, are hereby required and enjoined to be ready at all times, as well by night as by day, to manage, work and use all the same fire engines, and others of the tools and instruments aforesaid."

The firemen so appointed were made subject to such rules as the Common Council might prescribe "for the frequent exercising, trying and using of the same fire engines, tools, and other instruments."

It was decided in February, 1788, to remove the engine located in Nassau street to a house to be erected on the ground belonging to the Reformed Protestant Dutch Congregation adjoining the North Church.

The meddlesome and often obstructive character of the help given to the firemen by boys and excitable young men, which caused so much trouble and anxiety in later times to the controllers of the department, seems to have developed itself as early as 1789, for it is recorded as a decree of the august and reverend fathers of the city, that after the twelfth of August of that year no person under the age of thirty years should be appointed to the office of a fireman. But that law proved to be a decided drawback instead of a benefit to the department, and was therefore repealed in the following November.

The fire engines of the smallest size were used to approach nearest to the fire, and were, therefore, best adapted for the "leaders" to convey water through windows and narrow passes. When the "leaders" were used, none but firemen were willing to support them, and "it was attended by a general wetting by the water which gushes out of the seams." The foreman of these engines petitioned the Common Council for an assignment of ten men to each company, and their petition was acceded to in March, 1790.

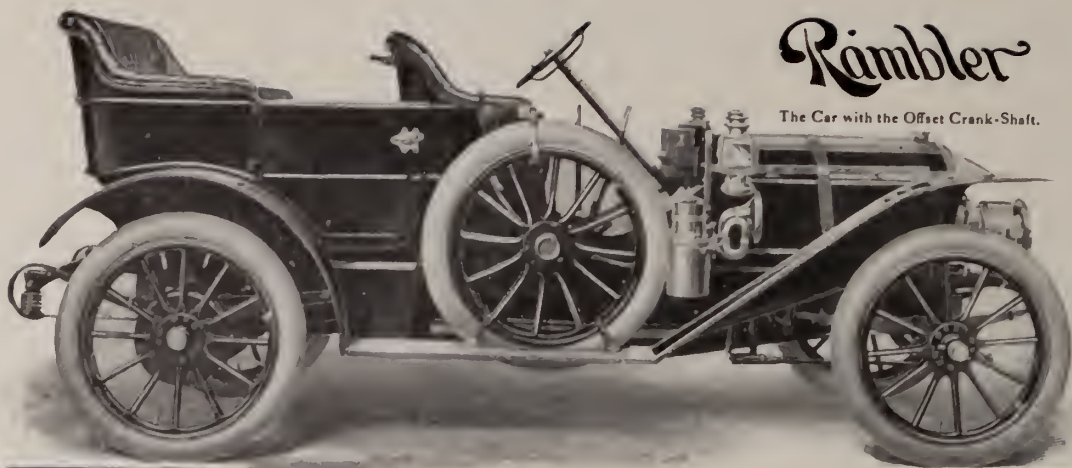
A revised law for preventing and extinguishing fires was passed on November 10, 1791, which, among other provisions, called for the appointment of fire wardens in the respective wards of the city.

As marks of distinction at fires, an insignia of official position, it was decreed by the same law that wardens should wear caps and carry certain wands and trumpets. And it was further ordered that all fines recovered as penalties for violations of the fire laws should be paid to the engineer, and by him appropriated as the fire marshal should direct.

In this year belong the earliest extant records of any fire company in the city, namely, those of Engine No. 13, which began in the month of November; also, the first written report known to have been made of the doings of the Fire Department proper, was made on the fourth of this month. The meeting was held in the house of Jacob Brouwer, in Nassau Street. The minutes of this meeting informs us that "engineers, firemen, and representatives" attended, but that the engineers and foremen were the only "representatives" present.



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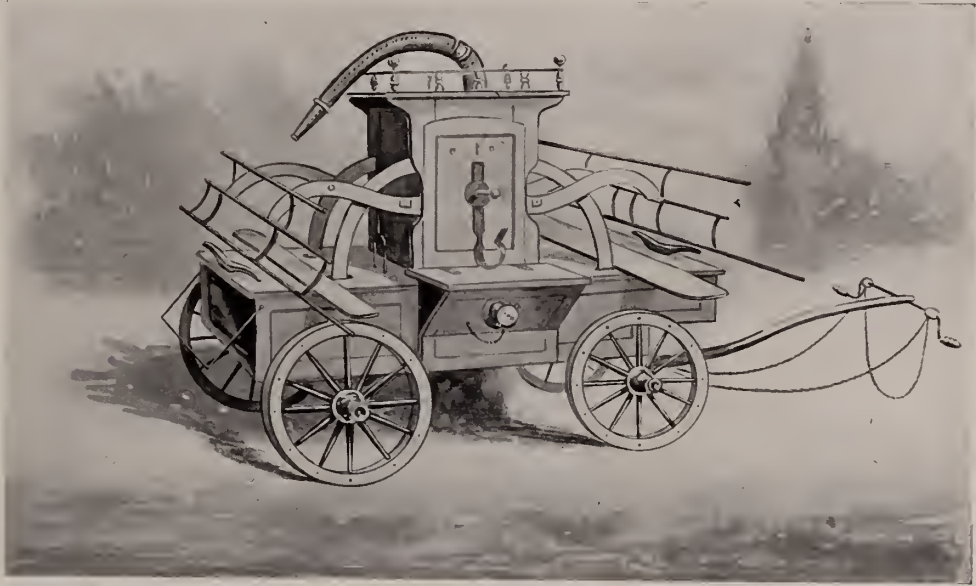
THE CAR OF STEADY SERVICE

The Fire Department, on the twentieth of December, 1791, held a meeting of representatives of their organization, authorized by their different companies, and framed a constitution, for the purpose of establishing a fund for the relief of unfortunate firemen whose misfortune was occasioned while doing duty as firemen.

The organization of the fire department up to January, 1792, consisted exclusively of engineers and foremen. The firemen, who were excluded, felt that they had a right to be represented, and they succeeded in carrying their point. By this change each company consisting of eighteen men were entitled to send two representatives, and each company consisting of less than this number was entitled to send one representative. Instead of all the engineers being members of the organization, only one of them was admitted to membership. The following were elected officers: John Stagg, president; Ahasuerus Turk, vice-president; William J. Elsworth, treasurer; Abraham Franklin, secretary.

In 1793 the Common Council embodied all its rules for the conduct of the fire department in a single ordinance. This ordinance is too valuable and too quaint a document not to be given nearly *verbatim*:

That the inhabitant and owner of every house in this city having less than three fireplaces shall provide one Leather Bucket; and having three fireplaces and under six,



FIRE APPARATUS USED DURING YEAR 1811

two; and having six fireplaces and under nine, four; and having nine fireplaces and upwards, six; and of every Brew-House, Distilling and Sugar-House, nine Buckets; and of every Bake-House four Buckets, each of which Buckets * * * shall be sufficient to contain at least two Gallons and a half of Water, and shall be marked with at least the initial letters of the Landlord's Name, and shall be hung in the entry or near the Front Door * * ready to be used for extinguishing fires, when there shall be occasion. The buckets to be got at the expense of the owner of the house, the tenant having the right to deduct the cost of the same from his rent. Penalty, six shillings for each bucket not provided.

So many Firemen shall from time to time be appointed in each of the Wards of this city as the Common Council shall deem proper, and shall be called Fire Wardens, whose Duty it shall be, immediately on the cry of fire, to repair to the place where it shall be, and to direct the inhabitants in forming themselves into Ranks for handling the Buckets to supply the Fire Engines with Water, in such places and in such manner as they may think will best answer the purpose, under the direction of the Mayor, Recorder, and Alderman, if present.

This ordinance further provides that the mayor, recorder, aldermen and assistants shall carry at fires "a white wand, at least five feet in length, with a gilded flame on the top; and each of the fire wardens shall wear upon those occasions a cap with the city arms painted on the front, and the crown painted white, and carry in his hand * * a speaking trumpet painted white."

This ordinance also provides that when a fire occurs the watchman shall give notice to the fire wardens, whose names and addresses are required to be hung up in the watch-house. "And it is enjoined on the inhabitants to place a lighted candle at the front window of their respective houses, in order that the people shall pass through the streets with greater safety. The men are also required at least once a month to exercise with their engines, etc., to wash, clean, and examine them, under a penalty of six shillings; and for every failure to attend at the fire, and for leaving his engine while at a fire, and for failure to do his duty at a fire, a fine of twelve shillings is imposed, and to be removed from office as fireman. The chief engineer is required to see that all buckets are collected after fires, and carried to the City Hall, and placed upon the pavement there under the Hall so that the citizens may know where to find them."

The fire wardens are required to examine the houses and buildings in their respective wards, and to see that "they be properly furnished with buckets;" and also to examine fireplaces, chimneys, outhouses, and buildings, stoves and pipes thereof, and give notice of any danger or deficiency to the mayor or recorder, who can impose a fine of ten shillings, if he feels so disposed. Stoves could be erected without the approval of the fire wardens, but subject to a fine of twenty shillings.

In 1793 the fire department consisted of twenty engines, two hook and ladder companies, twenty-two foremen, thirteen assistants, and three hundred and eighteen men.

About the year 1794 the fire engines were of a very inferior quality; and no water was to be had except from wooden-handle pumps. By a law of the corporation, every owner of a dwelling was obliged to procure a fire bucket for every fireplace in the house or back kitchen. These buckets held three gallons, and were made of sole leather. They were hung in the passage, near the front door, and when the bell rang for fire the watchmen, firemen, and boys, while running to the fire, sang out, "Throw out your buckets." These were picked up by the first who came along. Two lines were formed, from the fire to the nearest pump; when the pump gave out the lines were carried to the nearest river; one line passed down the empty, the other passed up the full buckets. It was seldom that any person attempted to break through these lines. As we have said elsewhere he would be roughly handled if he tried it. The firemen expected every good citizen to give them aid.

Up to 1795 private citizens had furnished the fire buckets. This plan did not prove satisfactory. As an improvement, each engine house was furnished with two poles, of sufficient length to carry twelve buckets each. These poles were carried on the shoulders of firemen when going to fires, as may be seen represented in engravings on old firemen's certificates. The general rule that prevailed was, that the first fireman to reach the engine house after an alarm of fire should have a right to the pipe, and take it with him to the fire; that the next four firemen to arrive should bear away the bucket poles; and that the rest of the company should run off with the engine, "bawling out and demanding the aid of citizens as they proceeded on."

An amendment to the building laws was recommended in February, 1795, that no building, excepting those of stone or brick, and covered with slate or tile, should be of any great height from the level of the ground to the lower part of the roof than twenty-eight feet, and that the pitch of the roof should not exceed ten inches per foot.

The Fresh Pond, or, as the Dutch designated it, *Kolch*, which name had been corrupted into the "Collect," was the scene of one of the most interesting events that the world ever saw. That was nothing less than the original experiment in steam navigation. Here, in 1795, was exhibited by John Stevens of Hoboken, a boat with a screw propeller driven by a steam engine. The next year another experiment was made in the same place by John Fitch, the real inventor of steam navigation, with a ship's hull into which he had placed a rude steam engine of his own construction, with paddle wheels at the sides of the boat. These experiments, with Fitch's invention, were made in presence and under the inspection of Chancellor Livingston, and Stevens, and Dr. W. H. and

doubtless afforded many of the facts and suggestions through which Fulton made the art available for useful purposes.

The location of engine houses in 1796 was as follows:

- No. 1 Engine House, opposite Groshin's brewhouse, Barley Street.
- No. 2 Engine House, near the new Methodist Church.
- No. 3 Engine House, Nassau Street, opposite City Hall.
- No. 4 Engine House, fronting the Playhouse, John Street.
- No. 5 Engine House.
- No. 6 Engine House, at the College Wall, Murray Street.
- No. 7 Engine House, Cliff Street, by the Church Wall.
- No. 8 Engine House, adjoining the Gaol yard.
- No. 9 Engine House, Whitehall Street, near the Government House.
- No. 10 Engine House, top of Catherine Street, in Chatham Street.
- No. 11 Engine House, Hanover Square.
- No. 12 Engine House, at the junction of Pearl and Cherry Streets.
- No. 13 Engine House, near Ferry Stairs, Fish Market.
- No. 14 Engine House.
- No. 15 Engine House, in Nassau Street, opposite the Federal Hall.
- No. 16 Engine House, in Liberty Street, near the New Dutch Church.
- No. 17 Engine House, near the New Slip.
- No. 18 Engine House, on the Hill, John Street, near Pearl Street.
- No. 19 Engine House, Hester Street, near Bowery Lane.
- No. 20 Engine House, Greenwich Street, at the new Albany Pier.
- No. 21 Engine House, adjoining burial ground of the Baptist Church, Gold Street.
- No. 22 Engine House, George Street.

A new engine was purchased in January, 1797, for Engine Company No. 1, and the membership raised to twenty. At the same time the petition of Peter Curtenius and others for a fire engine on Greenwich Street, between Reade and Lispenard Streets, was granted.

John Halsey represented to the Common Council in February, 1797, that he would undertake to import from Hamburg two fire engines, with long hose, to convey water from the river into the interior of the city, of superior quality, and on cheaper terms than similar machines could be manufactured in this country. The Council gave Mr. Halsey encouragement, and appointed a committee to communicate with him.

The act of March 19, 1787, limited the number of firemen to three hundred, to be nominated and appointed by the Mayor and Common Council, and they were by its provisions enjoined to be ready at all times, as well by night as by day, to manage, control, and use the fire engines to be provided, and were exempt from service as constables, jurors, and militiamen, and were placed generally under the regulation of the city government. In 1792 the number was increased to four hundred and fifty. On the twentieth of March, 1798, however, upon a petition of the firemen praying to be incorporated, the more effectually to enable them to provide adequate funds for the relief of disabled and injured firemen, and for the purpose of extinguishing fires, they were incorporated under the name of the Fire Department of the City of New York.

The members of the Department and their successors were accordingly rendered capable of suing and being sued "in all courts and places whatsoever, in all matters of actions, suits, complaints, causes and matters whatsoever, and that they and their successors may have a common seal, and may change and alter the same at their pleasure."

By this act, the firemen belonging to any of the engines of the city of New York were declared to be and to continue as such until the year 1818 a body politic, by the name of the "Fire Department of the City of New York." They and their successors were declared capable of purchasing, holding, and conveying any estate, real or personal, for the use of said corporation, not to exceed the sum of twenty thousand dollars. The said representatives, on the second Monday of December in every year, elected by ballot, out of their own body, a president and vice-president, and out of the whole body of firemen, three trustees, a treasurer, secretary, and collector.

The funds of the corporation were obtained from chimney funds, certificates, donations, etc.

The incorporation of the Fire Department appears to have acted as a signal for the

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THE GREAT FIRE OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, DECEMBER 16th and 17th, 1835

formation of fire insurance corporations. That arm of the commerce of our great city, now grown so powerful and far-reaching, holding in its sweep untold millions of capital, was represented at this period, so far as the statutes of this State indicate, only by two companies, known as "The United Insurance Company" and "The Mutual Assurance Company."

The latter company was incorporated in 1798, March 23, on the mutual plan, and among its incorporators are to be found names familiar to all insurance men, many of which will be found intimately associated with the history and progress of life, as well as fire insurance in this city. They embrace such names as Thomas Pearsall, Nicholas Gouverneur, Abraham Varick, Wynant Van Zandt, Samuel Franklin, John Thompson, Robert Lenox, Gulian Verplank, Samuel Bowne, and Leonard Bleecker.

The first intimation in the municipal records of the fire department of trouble arising from personal disagreements among members of a company, is given in the proceedings of the Board of Aldermen dated February 12, 1798. Therein it is set forth that the foreman and other members of Engine Company No. 7 complained against Jacob Tablie, one of their number, for rude and improper conduct, for refusing to observe rules and regulations of the company, and disturbing the harmony thereof. The board heard Mr. Tablie in his own defense, and concluded that the best interests of the company and the department demanded his removal, which was immediately effected, and John Drake was appointed in his stead.

A new fire engine was "imported" from Philadelphia in February, 1798, and placed in charge of Engine Company No. 15, stationed at the City Hall, and their old engine was packed off to the Seventh Ward.

Two fire engines arrived from Hamburg in the spring of 1799, and measures were taken for the erection of a house for them in the yard of the almshouse.

Thomas Howell imported two fire engines from London in December, which the Corporation purchased from him for the sum of four thousand dollars.

The fire department consisted of a single engineer, who received his appointment from the Common Council, and who was invested with absolute control over the companies, engines, and all else that pertained to the organization; a number of fire wardens, commissioned by the same authority to inspect buildings, chimneys, etc., and to keep order at fires; and several voluntary companies under the direction of a foreman, assistant, and clerk of their own choosing. A few engine houses had been built; the greater part of the hooks and ladders, buckets, etc., were deposited for safe keeping in the City Hall. Several of these pioneer companies retained their organization up to the time of the disbandment of the volunteer system.

It provides, in addition to the other, substantially as follows: The firemen of the city to consist of one chief, and as many other "engineers, fire wardens, hook and ladder men, and other firemen," as may be appointed by the mayor, etc., as firemen, and be distinguished by the said appellations.

The chief is to have control of the firemen, subject to the Common Council, and the engineers shall take proper measures for having several of the engines "placed, filled and worked," at fires. He is also to have charge of the repairs of engines, and to see that they are kept in good working order.

It became apparent in 1805 that the means employed for the extinguishment of fire required, and were susceptible of, much improvement. The increasing extent of the city and its population enhanced the possibilities of frequent and dangerous fires, at the same time that it supplied the means and indicated the propriety of putting the fire department upon a more effective and systematic footing. The utility of the floating engine had been fully established. But as it could not always be moved in due season to the place where it was wanted, it was proposed to procure another of the same kind. For a similar reason, and also because at some seasons the ice or other causes might wholly prevent the floating engines from being moved, it was recommended that two engines of like power be procured and placed on wheels, for service within the city. These latter were not intended as substitutes for the floating engines, but it was thought that four engines of the power specified were not more than could be usefully and profitably employed on many occasions. Certain of the engines then in use—Nos. 2, 5, 6, and 16—were both too small and greatly out of repair, and it was decided to sell them, and that in future uniformity in size and power in engines be attended to throughout the department. The screws of the

leaders were of different sizes, which led occasionally to trouble at critical moments. Uniformity in that respect, too, was to be observed regarding engines of similar power, and every common engine should have at least four leaders of forty feet each.

The streets were swept twice a week by the inhabitants, each opposite his own house; and for the collection of garbage a bell-cart came round daily in each street. The city was lighted by lamps, with oil. Wood was the principal article of fuel, and hickory was deemed the best. The chimneys were swept by small negro boys, whose street cries in the morning drew forth many a denunciation from those whose slumbers were thus disturbed. With the break of day did the streets ring with their cries of "Sweep, ho! sweep, ho! from the bottom to the top, without a ladder or a rope, sweep, ho!" to a chorus or cry, in which often were added dulced sounds of real harmony.

Fire plugs were first introduced in 1807, the first plug being put down at the corner of William and Liberty Streets. The chief engineer approved of it so highly that he recommended that each block in the city be similarly supplied.

The full strength of the fire department was eight hundred and sixty-nine men, as compared with seven hundred and sixty-one in the previous year (1806). It was made up of seven engineers, forty-eight fire wardens, seven hundred and seventy-eight fire engine men, and thirty-six hook and ladder men. The number of fire engine companies was thirty-four, of which Nos. 28 and 33 were the smallest, having only ten men each, and Nos. 25, 3 and 8 were the largest, having forty, thirty-two, and thirty men respectively. The floating engine was in charge of forty men. There were only two hook and ladder companies. In November the strength of Engine Company No. 25 was raised to fifty. Two years after, in December, the full strength of the department was nine hundred and fifty-five men, of whom seven were engineers, fifty-five fire wardens, eight hundred and forty-seven fire engine men, and forty-six hook and ladder men—an increase of twenty-eight men over the previous year (1808).

The expenses incurred by the city for supplies to the fire department for the eight years ending 1809 amounted to forty-three thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight dollars, and it was suggested that, inasmuch as the fire insurance companies were greatly benefitted by the existing organization of the fire department, they should be called upon to defray some proportion of the expense.

The city was again devastated by a terrible conflagration (May 19, 1811), which broke out about nine o'clock on Sunday morning near the northwest corner of Duane and Chatham Streets. The steeple of the brick church, and the cupola of the jail caught fire.

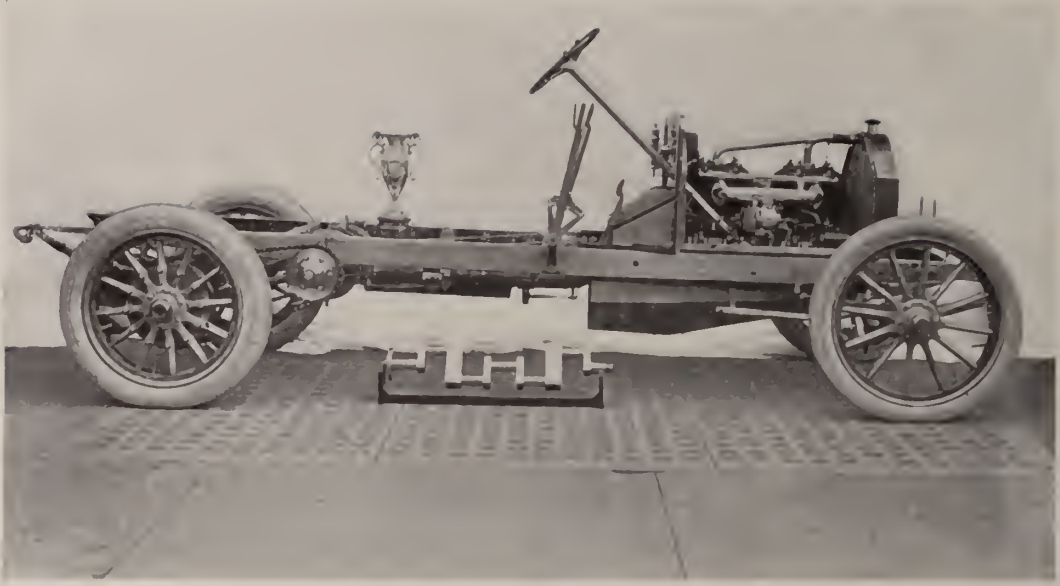
The frequent fires occurring in the fall of 1811 from no cause that could be reasonably ascribed, left no room to doubt that incendiaries were at their villainous work, and the mayor of the city again offered a reward of three hundred dollars for the apprehension and conviction of the offenders.

The fire wardens in December communicated to the Common Council that as the use of hose had in a great measure superseded the use of fire buckets, the ordinance requiring owners and occupants of houses to furnish buckets, should, in their opinion, be repealed, and also an application should be made to the legislature for an extension of the limits within which wooden buildings should not be erected.

In the following month the Council Committee reported upon that communication that, notwithstanding the advantages arising from the use of leaders, cases might arise in the interior of the city when, by a speedy collection of buckets, the fire might be extinguished ere the line by engines and leaders could be formed, and consequently it would be imprudent to discontinue the ordinance as requested. The number of buckets required to be kept might, however, be reduced by one-third, to lighten the burden on the citizens.

The condition of affairs in the city during the summer of 1812, whilst the National Government was prosecuting the war against Great Britain, had become most critical. There were fears of commotions and riots fomented by evil disposed people, which, if allowed to pass unnoticed, might lead to serious and alarming consequences. At this juncture (July, 1812), the members of engine companies Nos. 39, 36, and 8, volunteered their services to the chief magistrate, to assist in quelling any riot of disturbance that might arise, reserving to themselves, however, the privilege of being commanded by their own officers, without the interference of any military officer whatever.

An act for the more effectual prevention of fires was passed April 9, 1813. This act made it obligatory that dwelling-houses, storerooms, and other buildings, thereafter to be



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erected within the following boundaries, should be made and constructed of stone or brick, with party or fire walls, rising at least six inches above the roof, "and shall be covered, except the flat roof thereof, with tile or slate, or other safe materials, against fire, and not with boards or shingles," within that part of the city to the northward of the point of the Battery, and a line beginning upon the East River, opposite Montgomery Street, thence through Montgomery Street to Cherry Street, thence down Cherry Street to Roosevelt, through Roosevelt to Chatham, down Chatham to Chambers Street, through Chambers Street to Broadway, up Broadway to Canal Street, thence, commencing again at Chambers Street and running to Hudson's River, including also the lots of ground on the northerly and easterly sides of the said streets through which the above-mentioned line runs, and including, also, the lots of ground fronting on both sides of Broadway, between Chambers and Canal Streets.

The above designated portion of the city also constituted "the Watch and Lamp District."

Upon the breaking out of any fire within the city, the law required the sheriffs, deputy sheriffs, constables, and marshals, upon notice thereof, to repair immediately to the scene of the fire, with their rods, staves, and other badges of authority, and aid and assist in the extinguishing of the said fire, and cause the firemen in attendance to work; to prevent any goods or household furniture from being stolen; to seize all persons found stealing or pilfering; and to give their utmost assistance in removing and securing goods and furniture. They were subordinate to the mayor, recorder and aldermen, or any of them.

In case of fire, the mayor, or, in his absence, the recorder, with the consent and concurrence of any two of the aldermen, might order buildings to be pulled down.

The Common Council was authorized to pass ordinances for the extinguishment and prevention of fires; and also to regulate the keeping, carting, conveying, or transporting of gunpowder, or any other combustible or other dangerous material, within the bounds of the city; also to regulate the use of lights and candles in livery and other stables; to remove or prevent the construction of any fireplace, hearth, chimney, stove, oven, boiler, kettle, or apparatus, used in any manufactory or business, which might be dangerous in causing or promoting fires.

On the 10th of January, 1814, the chief engineer reported that during the preceding year the sum of one thousand and ninety-two dollars and twenty cents had been received and collected from fines, which were applied to the relief of disabled firemen and their families, and for educating about seventy of their children. On the above date it was resolved that the staves of office to be carried at fires by members of the Common Council be similarly constructed with those lately made (*viz.*: with a gilded flame at the top), "and that the justices of the police and the superintendent of repairs be furnished with staves, to be used on like occasions."

The estimated value of the property belonging to the fire department at the close of 1814 was as follows:

15 brick buildings.....	\$5,250 00
32 wood buildings.....	4,800 00
2 lots of ground.....	1,600 00
41 engines.....	26,200 00
Floating engine and boat.....	1,400 00
4 old engines not in use.....	750 00
13,085 feet leather hose.....	8,548 00
1,000 fire buckets.....	1,500 00
4 trucks, 15 ladders, and 20 fire hooks etc.....	1,200 00
Signal lanterns, torches, axes, etc.....	150 00
Drag ropes.....	70 00
Stoves and pipes.....	150 00
Hose wagon.....	175 00
1 copper pump.....	30 00
20 loads nut wood.....	90 00

Total.....\$51,913 00

The firemen having determined to apply to the legislature to enact a law granting

them certain privileges, and the renewal of their charter, deemed it expedient to place in the hands of the representatives the following calculations, showing the principles on which their petition was founded:

From this record it appears that there were in—

1795, 5 fires and 9 alarms,			1805, 13 fires and 6 alarms,		
1796, 6 " 6 "	Averaging		1806, 23 " 6 "	Averaging	
1797, 10 " 9 "	13 ³ / ₅ per		1807, 21 " 10 "	31 ² / ₅ per	
1798, 6 " 5 "	annum.		1808, 23 " 14 "	annum.	
1799, 6 " 6 "			1809, 16 " 25 "		
1800, 9 " 9 "			1810, 25 " 19 "		
1801, 11 " 6 "	Averaging		1811, 26 " 27 "	Averaging	
1802, 10 " 7 "	19 ³ / ₅ per		1812, 20 " 23 "	55 ² / ₅ per	
1803, 9 " 8 "	annum.		1813, 37 " 39 "	annum.	
1804, 16 " 13 "			1814, 29 " 32 "		

By this it appears their duty had increased in a fourfold proportion in the space of twenty years. From actual calculation on the average of the preceding five years, there was an increase of two hundred and seventy-five hours actual duty per annum, or two hundred and seventy-five days in ten years, allowing ten hours for a day.

The amount of the Fire Department Fund, December 1, 1814, was ten thousand six hundred and twenty-two dollars and thirty-eight cents; the amount of moneys paid the previous year for the relief of indigent firemen, their widows, and the schooling of their children, was one thousand five hundred and eighty-six dollars and twenty-five cents.

On April 11, 1815, there was passed "An act for the more effectual prevention of fires in the city of New York." This extended the fire limits from "a line beginning at the North River, at a place called Dekleyne's Ferry, a little to the northward of the State Prison, to the road commonly called the Sandy Hill road, to the northward of the Potter's Field and the house of William Neilson, to the Bowery, to a street commonly called Stuyvesant Street, to the East River."

The number of engineers was increased, on December 23, 1816, from eight to ten.

The first hydrant ever used in New York was located in front of the dwelling house of Mr. George B. Smith, of Engine Company No. 12, in Frankfort Street, in the year 1817. This was the origin of the hydrant system in this city.

Any fireman, while in the performance of his duty as such, who should so maim or injure himself as to render him thereafter unable to perform the duties of a fireman, or who should have so maimed himself since the fifth of the preceding May (Act, February 28, 1817), was entitled to the benefit of the law passed the twelfth of April, 1816, fixing the time of service of firemen at ten years.

With some of the church congregations it was made the express duty for the sextons to ring the bells at an alarm of fire, and with others it was an implied duty. At the fire on December 19, 1818, only a few of the bells were rung, and in consequence a large proportion of the firemen were not alarmed.

This fact was taken cognizance of by the Common Council, who convened a meeting of church officers, whereat it was arranged that no such neglect of duty should occur thereafter, and, to facilitate matters, it was made the duty of the watchmen at the cry of fire immediately to alarm the sextons.

The propriety of taxing the fire insurance companies of the city for the whole or a proportion of the expense annually incurred for the department was discussed in the Common Council in December, 1818, and the Committee on Applications to the Legislature were directed to inquire into its expediency.

On the twenty-seventh day of December, 1819, the Committee on the Fire Department reported that the fire buckets were being rapidly superseded by the use of hose, and, on their recommendation, the use of fire buckets at fires were dispensed with.

Very soon every new engine was furnished with suction, and the old machines were altered so as to use them. There was also an active and increasing demand for an additional supply of hose and hose carriages. The latter, at this time, consisted of a reel placed on the axle of two cartwheels, and was the invention of Foreman David J. Hubbs. It was either attached to the engine by tail hooks, or drawn by two members of the company. "Hubbs' Baby," as the simple contrivance was called, was the origin of the hose companies.

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According to the Comptroller's report for the year 1819 the amount expended for building engine houses in Fayette and Rose Streets, and at Greenwich, for ground and building, and building a house on Beaver Street, was twenty-one thousand and ninety-six dollars, and on account of engines to A. W. Hardenbrook, five thousand and ninety-six dollars and seventeen cents.

The floating engine had practically been in disuse during the year 1818, lying around most of the time at her slip at the foot of Roosevelt Street. In the summer of 1819 it was taken to the Corporation Yard on Leonard Street, and there set up as a supply engine for extinguishing fires in that part of the city. A company was formed to manage it, called Supply Engine Company No. 1, and consisting of Jacob P. Roome, foreman; Jacob Smith, Jr., assistant; William Roome, Isaac Skatts, William M. Wilson, and John Bowman. This company was stationed over a large well of water in the Public yard, from which she was never moved, and, consequently, never used only when the fire happened in the immediate neighborhood. The duties of the company, therefore, were much less arduous than those of other firemen, except the fire wardens. The Common Council, in view of these facts, decided in January, 1829, that no person should be eligible for membership in that company who had not borne the burden of the day by doing more active duty a few years previous, and, accordingly, fixed the necessary qualification for membership therein at five years' service in the department. But this action was repealed in February, 1830, for various reasons, among which were, that the term of service of firemen had been reduced from ten to seven years, and that during the existence of the restriction there had not been a single application for membership.

In conformity with an act passed in April, 1820, the fire wardens of the city were clothed with authority, in June of that year, to discharge the duties of health wardens, and were placed under the control of the Board of Health.

The value of the estate vested in the Fire Department as public property in 1820 was seventy-two thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine dollars.

The Common Council, on December 26, 1820, reduced the salary of the chief engineer, which had been eight hundred dollars, to five hundred dollars per annum. This ordinance also adopted the main features of the ordinance of May 5, 1817, and ordained that "no person shall be elected a fireman until he has attained the age of twenty-one years."

On the tenth of June, 1822, the Common Council ordained that whenever the office of any of the engineers of the Fire Department shall become vacant, it shall be the duty of the engineers of the Department to nominate five persons from among the foremen as suitable persons to supply such vacancy, and to give notice thereof to the foremen of the fire companies, and to require them to meet at such time and place as the said engineers shall appoint; and that the said engineers and firemen shall then and there, or at such other time and place as they may appoint by joint ballot, designate from the persons so nominated the person whom they may wish to fill such vacancy; and that no person shall be considered as so designated who shall not receive a majority of all the votes which shall be given.

The strength of the department in June, 1822, was one thousand two hundred and sixty-nine men, including engineers and fire wardens; forty-six engines, including two at the new almshouse; four hook and ladder trucks; one hose wagon, with ten thousand two hundred and forty-five feet of hose in good order (including six hundred feet at the new almshouse); one thousand two hundred and ten feet of hose ordinary; and eight hundred and eighty feet bad; two hundred and sixty-eight fire buckets, seventeen ladders, twenty-three hooks, one machine for throwing down chimneys, and one copper pump. In February, 1821, old Engine No. 3 was sold for six hundred and forty dollars, and a new one purchased for seven hundred and fifty dollars; in June, old No. 25 was sold for three hundred dollars exclusive of the hose, and a new one purchased at a cost of eight hundred and eight dollars; in October, old No. 5 was sold to A. W. Hardenbrook for five hundred dollars; in November, old No. 9 was sold for six hundred dollars. During 1822 (up to June) three new engines, Nos. 5, 9 and 28, were built at the corporation yard under the direction of Jacob Roome, superintendent of repairs, at a cost of five hundred and ninety-six dollars each; at least one hundred and fifty-four dollars apiece lower than the corporation had theretofore paid for engines of a similar size, and in point of workmanship and in other respects far superior (it was claimed) to any other belonging to the corporation.

A building law was enacted by the legislature, April 12, 1822, looking to the more

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Représentation du feu terrible à nouvelle York: que les Américains ont allumé pendant la nuit du 10, Septembre 1776, par lequel ont été brûlés tous les Bâtimens du côté de Vest, a droite de Borse, dans la rue de Broock jusqu'au collège du Roi, et plus de 1600, maisons avec l'Eglise de la Sc. Trinité la Chapelle. Luthérienne, et l'école des pauvres. Paris chez Basset Rue St. Jacques au coin de la rue des Mathurins.

FRENCH VERSION OF THE GREAT FIRE IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK IN THE YEAR 1776.

Representing the terrible fire in New York, started by the Americans during the night of September 10th, 1776, by which were destroyed all the buildings on the West side, to the right of the Borse, in Brook Street, up to King's College, more than 1600 houses, including Trinity Church, the Lutheran Chapel and the Paupers' School.

FIREMEN!

Don't Let This Building Burn

¶ If you do you will let one of the best equipped advertising agencies in the world go up in smoke.

¶ On the fifth floor of the Mercantile Building the J. Walter Thompson Company is located occupying the whole floor.

¶ The J. Walter Thompson Company is an advertising organization based on forty-four years of growth and experience. It conducts the advertising of some of the biggest enterprises in the United States.

¶ With headquarters in New York, we have offices in Chicago, Boston, Cleveland, Cincinnati and Detroit.

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J. Walter Thompson Co.

NEW YORK, 44-60 East 23d Street

BOSTON, 31 Milk Street

CLEVELAND, American Trust Bldg.

CHICAGO, The Rookery

CINCINNATI, First National Bank Bldg.

DETROIT, Trussed Concrete Bldg.



substantial construction of new buildings, and the imposition of penalties for any infraction of the same. Yet another act was passed the following year (April 9, 1823) of a similar nature, requiring that certain buildings should be fireproof. Other laws, of like scope and tendency, were passed at various subsequent dates.

So eager were young men to put on the red shirt and the helmet of the firemen and be recognized as such, that it was only by the most rigid supervision and discrimination they were prevented from being enrolled in the companies, and the law was on all occasions strictly enforced. But in the winter of 1822-23 a great deficiency of firemen was experienced, and a memorial was presented by the fire department to the corporation praying for an amendment of the law so as to permit young men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one to be chosen as firemen. But inasmuch as the law passed April 9, 1813, prescribed that none but freeholders and freemen were eligible, the Council decided that they had no power to do as requested.

For the six years preceding 1823 the cash expenses of the corporation for engines and apparatus, including the ground purchases and the engine houses erected, amounted to seventy-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-six dollars and ninety-four cents, averaging thirteen thousand three hundred and thirty-two dollars per annum. The value of the estate vested in that species of public property was estimated in 1820 at seventy-two thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine dollars.

The number of engine companies (including hook and ladder companies) in January, 1813, was forty-seven, to which one thousand two hundred and fifteen men, all told, were attached, all of whom, when they should have served ten years from 1816, were to be exempted from serving as jurors, and all military duty thereafter. These facts suggested the question whether the existing number of engines was not more than was needed, and whether some of them could not be dispensed with, in view of the fact that the sum of nine thousand five hundred and thirty-six dollars was asked for in the annual estimate for departmental expenses for 1823 for the Fire Department. At that period no city in the Union incurred fire department expenses in any way proportioned to the city of New York. In Philadelphia the engines and apparatus were furnished by individuals, and the privilege of exemption from jury and military duty were considered a sufficient remuneration, the City Council only appropriating about two thousand dollars toward the necessary repairs. The same economical system was pursued in the other cities throughout the United States. Mayor Allen, calling the attention of the Common Council to this matter, said that while they were drawing upon the property of the citizens in taxes so large an amount for fire purposes, and at the same time compelling them to perform nearly double duty as jurors in consequence of the exemption granted the firemen, it was no more than reasonable that the benefit to be derived in a public point of view should be commensurate with the sacrifice. Before the establishment of fire insurance companies in New York, the benefits derived from the Fire Department were perhaps equal to the expenditure. But it was very questionable then, when almost every species of property liable to be destroyed or injured by fire was insured against loss, whether any material public benefit was derived. The subject was of sufficient importance to the Common Council to cause an inquiry to be instituted whether the finances could not be relieved by a reduction of the expenses for the Fire Department. On the thirteenth of January the Common Council decided to apply to the legislature for authority to assess and levy annually a tax on fire insurance companies to be applied toward defraying the expenses of the Fire Department.

In conformity with the presentation of the condition of the finances by Mayor Allen, and his suggestion that retrenchment be introduced, if possible, the chief engineer, in July, 1823, reported that retrenchment was practicable only in the matter of hose, substituting hemp hose for leather, which was only half the price.

The strength of the Fire Department in June 1823, was one thousand two hundred and eighty-four men, all told; forty-six engines, including two at the new almshouse; four hook and ladder trucks, one hose wagon, and eleven thousand five hundred and seventy-five feet of hose, good, bad, and indifferent; two hundred and eighty-five fire buckets, sixteen ladders, twenty-three hooks, one machine for pulling down chimneys, and one copper pump.

Besides the regularly appointed firemen, there were attached to each company, a number of self-constituted firemen, who were known as "volunteers." Their services, it appears, were not appreciated by the Common Council, and on the twenty-first of June,

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Northport
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1824, a resolution was approved, and directed as a circular to each company, ordering them to dispense with the services of these men, and, in case of their non-compliance, to send the engine, hook and ladder, or hose cart, as the case might be, to the corporation yard, and report the company to the Common Council.

In June, 1824, the condition of the Fire Department called forth great praise from a special committee of the Common Council, who made a tour of inspection, and declared that it was not surpassed by any other in the United States. The volunteer boys, who assumed the dress and authority of firemen attached to companies, were the source of much annoyance, by causing false alarms of fire, whereby the members were constantly harassed and fatigued, and the machines injured to a great degree.

According to the report of Chief Engineer Jameson Cox, the condition of the department in June, 1825, was: Forty engines in good order, four indifferent, and two ordinary; four hook and ladder trucks and one hose wagon, ten thousand five hundred an seventy-four feet of hose, two hundred and twenty-eight fire buckets, eighteen ladders, and twenty-



FIREMEN FIGHTING FLAMES, 1840

three hooks. With companies complete, the force would number one thousand three hundred and nineteen men, all told, but there was two hundred and thirty-one vacancies. During the year engine houses had been built for Companies Nos. 10, 19, and 33.

The Committee on the Fire Department reported on the twentieth of June on the subject of constructing public cisterns, and recommended a resolution, which was adopted, that the street commissioner be directed to prepare ordinances for the construction of ten public cisterns, the same to be used on the occasion of fire by the fire department. Subsequently, on the nineteenth of December, 1825, ordinances were passed for the construction of five additional cisterns. On the twenty-third of the same month, the Committee on the Fire Department were instructed to inquire into the expediency of filling all the public cisterns with water forthwith, and the fire companies were requested to volunteer their services to carry the above into effect.

A resolution was referred to the Committee on the Fire Department, in conjunction with the chief engineer, to mature a report to the board of some more energetic and effi-

cient plan to protect the firemen when on duty at fires from the encroachments of the surrounding populace. On the thirteenth of January, 1826, the committee reported the following resolution, which was adopted:

Resolved, That His Honor, the Mayor, be requested to address a circular to each of the foremen of the several companies of fire wardens, calling their attention to that section of the law pointing out their duties at fires, and that each of them would enforce the same on the members of their companies, and that the penalties which may hereafter be incurred by the constables and marshals of the city for not attending fires, be enforced.

On the second of January, 1827, seven additional cisterns were ordered by the Common Council, and eighteen on the twenty-fifth of August, 1828.

The firemen of the city were an incorporated body, under the name and title of the Fire Department of the City of New York, and had certain emoluments allowed them, which they appropriated to charitable purposes, such as giving pensions to the widows of deceased firemen, making donations to indigent disabled firemen, and furnishing necessary clothing to children of firemen, so as to enable them to attend the public schools. Each company appointed annually two of their number to represent them in the fire department, and such representatives, when assembled, appointed out of the body of firemen in the city a board of trustees, who were intrusted with the funds, and at whose discretion widows were put on the pension list, and donations were made. In consequence of severe and heavy losses which the department had sustained in 1826 by several moneyed institutions in the city, the board of trustees had come to the conclusion that they would be under the necessity of suspending the pensions and donations, unless they received assistance from their fellow-citizens. In January, 1827, the Common Council, recognizing the close connection between the interests of the firemen and the corporation, decided that it was proper and judicious to lend a helping hand, and directed the comptroller to issue his warrant for one thousand dollars in favor of the treasurer of the fire department fund. Two years after, another one thousand dollars was donated, because the frequency of the fires in the fall of 1829, and the consequent increasing demand on the treasury of the fire department fund from disabled and sick firemen had left the treasury in December of that year almost exhausted. As many as eighty-eight widows, and a large number of orphan children, had to be provided for in that year.

At the fire at the Vauxhall Garden in August, 1828, one of the engine companies, and several members of other companies, refused to perform service, and a rumor prevailed throughout the city that the firemen as a body had refused to obey orders, which caused general alarm among the inhabitants. Upon investigation, it was found that the demoralization was very limited, and measures were taken to keep up the efficiency of the force.

"Firemen's Hall," in Fulton Street, had accommodations for four engines. The placing of so many machines in one immediate vicinity had been found to be prejudicial to the services of the department, and in some instances to be a nuisance to the neighborhood. These facts, superadded to the necessity of providing engines for the upper part of the city by taking them from the lower part those that could well be spared and were poorly supplied with men, had gradually caused the reduction of the number of engines there until, in February, 1829, only one was left, and the removal of that, too, had been decided on. The corporations concluded that the ground occupied for Firemen's Hall being no longer needed, they would sell it by auction, which was done on April 1.

In June, 1829, there were in the department forty-eight engines, five hook and ladder trucks, with twenty-six ladders and twenty-nine hooks, and one thousand four hundred and thirty-two men with full companies, but only eight hundred and sixty-nine in actual service, there being five hundred and sixty-three vacancies.

Engine No. 28 was located on corporation ground on Mercer Street, and the Council had directed that hook and ladder No. 6 should also be stationed there. It was therefore decided in August, 1829, to erect a two-story brick building on the lot, in which, besides housing these companies, a ward court could be accommodated and the meetings of the fire department be held.

Although the natural advantages of New York in other respects were not excelled, nor perhaps equalled, by any city in the world, yet it had to be admitted that the supply of water for household purposes and for the extinguishment of fires was, in 1829, very meagre. Various schemes had been adopted for the purpose of bringing water into the city, but none had, as yet, complied with the main object of their charters, so far as the

public was concerned, and it was found that similar incorporations of private individuals, whether they proposed at their commencement to furnish pure and wholesome water or pure and first quality gas, had an eye only to the profits of their incorporations, and the public suffered under their monopolies.

The water pipes of the Manhattan Company extended to such parts of the city as they deemed advisable to put them in on the score of profit, and the upper part of the city, although not possessed of good water, had it, however, of a quality superior to that supplied by the Manhattan Company, and, therefore, the residents were unwilling generally to take the Manhattan water. The result was that all that part of the city lying above Grand Street, on Broadway, or Pearl Street, on the east side of the city, did not have the use of the Manhattan water for the purpose of extinguishing fires. It became necessary, therefore, for the corporation to obtain a supply of water for that purpose to the upper part of the city.

The breadth of the island at Grand Street was then reckoned about two miles, and this did not materially differ as high as Fourteenth Street. The extreme distance between those points was, consequently, one mile, and to bring water from either river at the extreme distance would require twenty-six engines, and thus the whole engine establishment could not form two lines. The furnishing water by engines from the river was not only too limited a mode to be at all relied on for that section of the city, but was also too laborious on the firemen.

Another mode of supply was by cisterns, which was in operation at this period to a limited extent. The corporation had forty public cisterns, at a cost of twenty-four thousand dollars, which usually contained one hundred hogsheads. To provide for the section of the city between Fourteenth and Grand Streets, on Broadway, and Fourteenth and Pearl Streets, on Chatham, by cisterns, would require the construction of at least sixty additional cisterns, on the scale of a cistern for each one thousand square feet, which, at an expense of six hundred dollars each, would call for an expenditure of thirty-six thousand dollars.

In March, 1829, the corporation decided to lay down two lines of iron pipes for the security against fire of the section of the city before described, one line of tubes to run from Fourteenth Street through the Bowery, to its termination at Chatham Street, and a line of tubes from Fourteenth Street through Broadway to Canal Street, connecting with a reservoir containing two thousand hogsheads (or as much as twenty cisterns) on Fourteenth Street.

The committee of the fire department reported on the sixteenth of November, 1829, that, although they had excavated only fifty feet in depth at Thirteenth Street, yet the quantity of water would be sufficient to fill the reservoir and pipes, as it was estimated that seventy hogsheads of water were issued a day; that the cast-iron tank was received from Philadelphia, and that the same should be inclosed with brick or wooden building—the cost of the former being estimated at three thousand five hundred dollars, and of the latter two thousand dollars. Which report was agreed to.

A fireman should have experienced five years' service before he was eligible for appointment as a warden. In consequence of the reduction of the term of service of firemen from ten to seven years, the wardens encountered no small difficulty in procuring the aid of such competent persons as were willing to do the duty of wardens for the short space of time—two years—during which they were eligible for office. The ordinance affecting this matter was therefore amended in November, 1830, reducing the term of service of eligibility from five to three years.

The legislature, on April 16, 1831, extended the charter of the firemen of the city of New York, passed March 20, 1798, to the year 1860. The corporation was likewise empowered to purchase, hold, and convey any estate, real or personal, for the use and objects for which the said corporation was instituted, "but such real or personal estate shall not exceed the sum of fifty thousand dollars."

This act was amended March 25, 1851, by which the said corporation could hold and convey any estate, real or personal, for the use already mentioned, but not to exceed the sum of one hundred thousand dollars.

An important State law, relative to the prevention of fires in the city of New York, was enacted on the 20th of April, 1830. This law was quite lengthy, containing forty-two sections. Reference can be made only to its general features. Party walls, the law

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declared, shall be constructed of stone or brick; outside party walls shall not be less than eight inches thick, except flues of chimneys; party or end walls shall rise and be extended to the roof, and so far through the same as to meet and be joined to the slate, tile or other covering thereof, by a layer of mortar or cement; beams and other timbers in the party walls shall be separated from each other, at least four inches, by brick or mortar; all hearths shall be supported with arches of stone or brick. No timber shall be used in the front or rear of any building within such fire limits where stone is now commonly used; every building within the fire limits, which may hereafter be damaged by fire, to an amount equal to two-thirds of the whole value thereof, after the lapse of at least fifteen years from the time of its first erection, shall be repaired or built according to the provisions of this act; no wooden shed exceeding twelve feet in height at the peak shall be erected within the fire limits.

A large part of the act is devoted to the regulation of the keeping and storage of gunpowder.



FIRE AT THE TOMBS (CENTRE STREET), 1842

A law, forming a hydrant company, was passed by the Common Council on July 16, 1831. This company consisted of a foreman, assistant, a clerk, and twenty men, who were firemen and hydrant men. It was their duty, on an alarm of fire, to proceed to the hydrants, and see to the water being properly let out, that the hydrants were not injured, that they were properly secured and put in order after the fire was extinguished; and also to see that the stop-cocks were kept in order; and generally to attend to the engines being supplied with water from the reservoir; to report all injuries and defects which they might discover in any part of the works to the chief engineer. The caps of said company were painted black, and had the words "Hydrant Company" on the frontispiece thereof.

A fire and building department was created and organized by a law passed and approved in October, 1831. It was composed of three "discreet and proper persons," known as the commissioners of the fire and building department, and the commissioners

were respectfully designated a superintendent of buildings, chief engineer, and commissioner of the fire department.

The duty of the superintendent of buildings required him to advertise for estimates for all public buildings which might thereafter be erected under the authority of the Common Council, for all repairs to public buildings then in use, etc.

It was the duty of the chief engineer to report the names of persons who may be designated by the engineers and foremen as suitable persons to be appointed by the Common Council to fill vacancies in fire companies; in all cases of fire to have the sole and absolute command and control over all engines and members of the fire department; to direct the other engineers to take proper measures that the fire engines were suitably arranged and duly worked; to examine, once in every month, into the condition and number of the fire engines, and buckets, and other fire apparatus and fire engine houses; and report the same to the Common Council twice in every year; and whenever any of the engines and apparatus should require to be repaired or new ones built, the chief engineer should personally inspect the building of the same; to report in writing all accidents by fire, with the probable causes thereof, etc.

Further, the commissioners should give their personal attention and supervision to the laying down of all such water pipes as the Common Council may direct, take charge of the reservoir and water establishment in Thirteenth Street, see that the hydrants were in order, etc.

The commissioners were obliged to give bonds in the sum of five thousand dollars, besides being sworn, for the faithful performance of their duties.

Pursuant to the organizing of the new department, the enlargement of the house of Fire Engine Company No. 10, the erection of a two-story brick house on the lot corner of Delancey and Attorney Streets for the accommodation of a fire engine, hook and ladder company and hose truck, the building of a hose house in Wooster Street, near Houston Street, the procuring of four thousand feet of hose, and the construction of a new engine for Company No. 11, were undertaken immediately.

The proviso in the law forming a hydrant company, approved July 16, 1831, was repealed in May, 1832, and thenceforth it was ordained that no individual could be eligible for appointment as hydrant man unless he had served as a fireman for at least three years.

Although *quasi* officers of the municipality, it was charged that certain firemen frequently exhibited as much indifference to the injunctions of the authorities as might be looked for only from the lawless class. Hence, in July, 1832, it became necessary to promulgate a law ordaining that any fireman found guilty of an offense against the ordinances of the Common Council, and having thereby resigned or been expelled, should not be eligible to an appointment to any office of trust, in any company, nor reappointed a fireman in any case.

Also, it was not uncommon for the foreman or engineer of an engine company to hire out the engine, and to lend it, on his own responsibility, which was subversive of all semblance of discipline, and impaired of efficiency of the particular company. Consequently, a provision was incorporated in the law of July, 1832, that no fire engine should be let out for hire, or lent in any case, with permission from the alderman or assistant alderman wherein it was wanted to be used, and the chief engineer, in default thereof, and the fireman so offending, would be removed from the Fire Department.

During the prevalence of the epidemic of cholera in 1832 the working force of the department was much weakened by reason of sickness and death. Very often not enough men, nor even supernumeraries, boys and youths who loved to linger in the shadow of the engine house and be permitted to mingle with the hardy fire fighters, could be mustered to drag the engine to the scene of the conflagration. Horses had to be brought into requisition, and it is attested by the fact that in November, 1832, the comptroller was authorized to pay the bill of James Gulick for eight hundred and sixty-three dollars and seventy-five cents, for horses "to drag the engines and hook and ladder trucks to the fires during the late epidemic."

The custom was in those days, upon the outbreak of a fire, to ring the church bells as well as the fire bells, and when the fire happened during the night, the watchman in his tower should ring the alarm, and hand out of the window of the cupola a pole with a lantern on the end pointing in the direction of the fire, so that the firemen and citizens could readily know the whereabouts of the fire. Further, the watchman (the police) were

obliged to call out the street or between what streets the fire was located. The law of the municipality regarding these observances were inflexible, delinquency on the part of the bellringers or the watchmen being visited with severe penalties.

The cost of supporting the fire department by the city varied considerably. In 1830 it amounted to twenty-two thousand nine hundred and sixty-two dollars. The actual number of fires that happened in that year were one hundred and nineteen; false alarms, one hundred and twenty-five; and the loss of property, one hundred and fifty-seven thousand one hundred and thirty-five dollars. In 1831 the expenses of the department amounted to twelve thousand nine hundred and eighty-four dollars.

Careful calculations showed that although it cost in 1832 only eighteen thousand dollars to maintain the fire department, the individual firemen were taxed in their services two hundred and eighty-four thousand five hundred dollars annually. It is true their labors were rendered voluntarily, and they had an equivalent, but it did not render it less imperative on the city authorities, as the common guardians of this great community, to diminish the labors and personal exposures and risks of that meritorious, skillful and patriotic class of citizens.

The alleged improper and riotous conduct of the members of several companies of the department, and the congregating of idle and dissolute persons in the engine houses, had been for several months the subject of complaint from residents in the vicinity of engine houses. Boys and young men, too, obtained ever ready access to the engines, and made it a matter of amusement to raise an alarm of fire as an excuse or cover to get the engines out and have a run. Evidently the engine companies could prevent those scenes. But in cases of fire the companies desired some assistance from these boys and young men, which induced them to countenance the assemblages. The Common Council investigated the complaints, and in October, 1834, reported that the members of some of the companies could not be depended upon to prevent the engine houses being entered and frequented by persons other than those belonging to the fire department, and suggested the enactment of a law providing a remedy.

That a prompt alarm of fire might be given, a watchman was stationed at all times in the cupola of the City Hall. The law so providing was approved by the mayor April 1, 1835. The chief engineer, by and with the consent of the mayor, was empowered to appoint a competent number of persons to perform the duty of such watchmen, day and night, subject severally to removal by the chief engineer. These bellringers, nevertheless, were amenable at all times during the night to the rules and regulations of the watch department. On the occurrence of any fire, the City Hall bell should be rung by the watchman on duty in the cupola, and the ringing thereof maintained during the continuance of the fire. Notice of the locality of the fire was given by ringing said bell in a manner prescribed by directions given by the committee on fire and water and the chief engineer, and by hanging out a light in the direction of the fire. For neglect of any of the duties required by this law, the penalty imposed was removal from office by the chief engineer or captains of the watch.

Upon the happening of any fire, the several watchhouses and market bells were rung, and also all other alarm bells, and the same was done whenever any one alarm bell should ring, and the ringing thereof continued until the city bell had stopped.

It will be seen from these facts that the fire department kept pace with the growth of the city. The people were quick to recognize the importance of keeping up, both in numbers and efficiency, a body of men so necessary to the welfare of the growing metropolis. Year by year, nay, almost month by month, additions to the department were made, and alterations effected to improve it. The enactment of the new building laws was a great help to the firemen, and its enactment gave them a great advantage over their natural enemy—an advantage which prior to this they did not possess.

It will also be noted how eager the firemen were to maintain an *esprit de corps*. Before the period we are just concluding efforts had been made to diminish the number of the hangers-on of the department. As the city grew these parasites increased, and the difficulty was all the greater to keep them off. We have shown how persistently and honorably the firemen endeavored to abate this nuisance. They could not wholly dispense with the services of outsiders, but those whom they did employ they took care should be of the best quality obtainable.

It was only natural in the period we have just discussed that the department should

E. J. CABOT, Manager

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complain of the insufficiency of water. That was not a matter that could be attended to until science had a greater play than she experienced in those days. Indeed, up to the present there has been a constant cry that New York has not all the water she needs. In the past, as in the present, the firemen did the very best they could to utilize what was at their disposal for the benefit of the city.

Mayor Lawrence, in September, 1835, called the attention of the Common Council to the frequency of fires, and particularly the one in Fulton, Ann and Nassau Streets, and also the fire in Water Street and Maiden Lane, by which a large amount of property was destroyed and lives lost. He expressed the belief that these were the work of incendiaries, and he suggested the propriety of offering a reward for such information as should lead to the detection and conviction of the criminals. The Council empowered him to do so in his discretion, and, accordingly, a proclamation of five hundred dollars was issued.

Not more than a fortnight after the issuance of this proclamation another large fire broke out in Franklin and Chapel (new College Place) Streets, bearing every mark of being of incendiary origin, and another reward of five hundred dollars was offered.

Then following the terrible conflagration of December 16, which destroyed in one night twenty million dollars' worth of property, and dislodged more than six hundred mercantile firms. By that calamity the extensive resources and irrepressible energies of the citizens were developed, and it forms a proud record for the pages of history that not a single mercantile failure resulted therefrom, and many of the heavy sufferers were among the most active in aiding the widows, orphans and infirm persons reduced to poverty and dependence.

The element of rodyism in the fire department hitherto referred to as being so pronounced that the citizens begged for the interference of the authorities, again manifested itself at a fire which occurred on the night of January 1, 1836, when Alderman Purdy, representing the Tenth Ward, was set upon and mercilessly beaten by members of Engine Company No. 10, who were also accused of abandoning their engine on that occasion. For the latter offense, nine officers and members were expelled from the department, and ten were suspended for not complying with the requisitions to appear before a committee of the Common Council and testify in reference to the assault on Alderman Purdy.

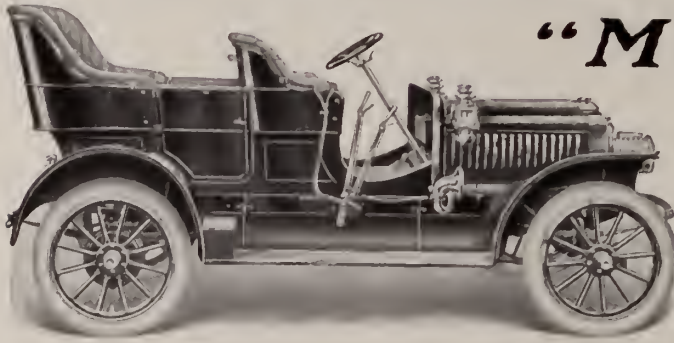
With the opening of the spring of 1836, the number of fires in the city had increased to an alarming extent, and a proportionate increase in the number of firemen had become necessary. This increase was not attainable, by reason of the citizens being deterred from becoming firemen in consequence of the arduous and toilsome duties which the members of the fire department were incessantly called upon to perform. As the increase was absolutely necessary for the safety of the city, it became a duty incumbent on the authorities to encourage citizens to join the fire department by lessening, as far as possible, the labors of the firemen, as well as removing such impediments to their exertions as existed.

Among those impediments, that caused by young men—who appeared at fires in the garb of firemen—was especially prominent. The engineers had no control over them, and their insubordination, utter lawlessness, and the confusion they created, proved a continual source of annoyance and serious hindrance both to the engineers and the regular firemen, a great majority of whom would gladly dispense with their precarious assistance if by so doing they could be freed from all suspicion of participating in riots created by these boys, and which, instead of being assigned to their true cause, were attributed to the members of the fire department.

To accomplish these two purposes, it was determined to appoint four persons to each fire engine and hose company, and two persons to each hook and ladder company, to take care of the apparatus and assist generally, and make it the duty of all members of the department to prevent persons not belonging to the department, especially boys, from entering any house or handling any apparatus belonging to the department, said appointees not to be considered as firemen, and to be paid at the rate of one hundred and fifty dollars per annum.

The Third Ward Hose Company, whose origin was traceable to the conflagration of December, 1835, tendered its services to the corporation in March, 1836, which were accepted, and they were recognized as a volunteer fire company, attached to, but not a part of, the fire department.

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From the report of the chief engineer, John Ryker, Jr., it appears that the condition of the fire department on October 3, 1836, was:

Forty-nine engine companies, six hook and ladder companies, nine hose companies, with an active available force of nine hundred and thirty-seven men.

Half a century ago it was an honor to be an alderman or an assistant. They were elected by their fellow citizens for their integrity and ability, and as a consequence were entrusted and invested with privileges and functions of a magisterial nature. Hence it came about that, next to the mayor of the city, they were, perhaps, among civic functionaries, the most important. That was their status as concerns fires, for to them (as the law prescribed, the marshals and constables, repairing immediately on the alarm of fire, with their staves of office, to the scene of the fire, should report and should conform to such orders as might be given them by the mayor, the alderman and assistant of the ward, or by any one of the aldermen, for the preservation of the public peace, and the removal of all idle and suspected persons or others not actually or usefully employed in aiding the



CONFLICT BETWEEN COMPANIES ON WAY TO FIRE, 1845

extinguishment of such fire, or in the preservation of property in the vicinity thereof; and if any marshal or constable should not attend at such fire, or should neglect so to report himself, or to obey any orders that were given him, he should, unless he had a reasonable excuse, to be determined by the mayor, forfeit and pay five dollars for each offense.

Two persons were appointed to each fire engine and hose company (ordinance May 10, 1836), and two persons to each hook and ladder company within the lamp and watch district, their duty consisting of keeping all the apparatus of the companies in complete order and ready for immediate use; upon every alarm of fire they repaired forthwith to the house of the engine, hose, or hook and ladder company to which they were attached, and assisted the members in conveying the engine, carriage or truck to the fire, and there assisted the company in getting the engine to work, or the hose ready for immediate action, under the direction of the officers of the company to which they belonged; and during the time such engine or hose carriage was employed at a fire, the two persons named in the ordinance took charge of the hose, and prevented any persons

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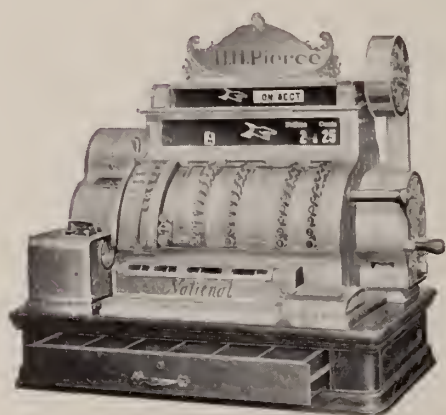
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from treading on, or otherwise injuring the same. They also assisted the members, when the engine or hose carriage was discharged from duty, after the putting out of a fire, in taking up the hose and other apparatus, and assisted in conveying them, together with the engine or hose carriage, etc., to the house appropriated for it, and there washed and dried the hose, and cleaned and put in complete order all the apparatus, so as to be ready for immediate use, taking care, however, in no case to meddle with the works of an engine.

Those persons similarly appointed and attached to a hook and ladder company, preserved the truck and apparatus belonging to their company from injury during the fire; assisted the members in raising or moving ladders and hooks, and rendered assistance, after the fire, in getting the apparatus to the house, etc.

"Among the novelties of New York," it was remarked by an observant writer (1837), "there is nothing perhaps which strikes a stranger with more surprise than the frequency of fires. There is scarcely a day from January to July, and from July to January, when there is not an alarm—a cry of fire—and a ringing of bells. But a single alarm for each day in the year, would be too low an average. To say the bells are rung and the firemen called out five hundred times in the three hundred and sixty-five days, would not exceed the truth."

"Strangers are very often alarmed," continues the same writer, "as well as surprised, at the frequent cries of fires in this city, and fancy from the hideous outcry of the boys and the rueful jangling of the bells, that the fire is close to, if not within their very lodgings; and that New York is, every day, on the verge of a general conflagration. To this alarm, the bells very much, perhaps needlessly, contribute. As soon as an alarm of fire is given they fall to ringing in all quarters with great zeal and force; and some of them continue their clamor for a considerable time after the danger is past, or after the alarm is ascertained to be a false one. The first in the field, the most vigorous in action, and the last to quit, is the bell of the Middle Dutch Church. Who the ringer of that bell is, we do not know; but this we will aver, that he labors with a zeal and perseverance that are quite astounding. We fancy he now and then gets up in his sleep to exercise his vocation. At any rate, whether asleep or awake, he seems to have a remarkable fondness for pulling at the end of a rope."

In May, 1838, the laws and ordinances relating to fires and the fire department were amended and modified so that the department should consist of a chief engineer, nine assistant engineers, a water purveyor, and as many fire wardens, fire engine men, hosemen and hook and ladder men as might from time to time be appointed by the Common Council. The chief engineer should be nominated by the engineers, foremen and assistant foremen; and the assistant engineers by the foremen and assistant foremen of the fire companies, respectively, to the Common Council for appointment, and should hold their offices during the pleasure of the Common Council.

The salary of the chief engineer was fixed at twelve hundred dollars per year.

The water purveyor should be appointed by and hold office during the pleasure of the Common Council, at a salary of one thousand dollars per year, take charge of the public reservoirs and establishments of water for the extinguishment of fires.

The engineers, foremen and assistant foremen should meet on the first Tuesday in June annually for the purpose of nominating a suitable person for chief engineer.

So many of the freeholders or freemen as the Common Council deemed proper should from time to time be appointed in each of the wards of the city, denominated fire wardens, assigned and attached by the mayor to such company of firemen as he should think proper, the fire wardens of each ward forming a separate company.

The names and places of abode of the members of the Common Council, engineers, fire wardens and firemen of the respective companies, and bell ringers, were annually, in the month of June, printed and set up in the several watchhouses by the city inspector, and whenever any fire happened in the night the watch gave notice to them within their respective watch districts.

Mayor Aaron Clark, in his annual message, referring to the fire department, said that their importance was universally admitted. They were to be congratulated, he said, upon their efficiency and usefulness, and the general harmony then prevailing among the companies composing the department, consisting, as it did, of a numerous body of citizens engaged in various pursuits and businesses, and voluntarily associated for the preserva-

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tion of property and life from the ravages of conflagration, it had become identified with the safety and the happiness of the citizens. For intrepidity, skill and firmness of purpose "in the summer's heat and the winter's cold," their firemen were unsurpassed by those of any country.

In July, 1838, the insurance companies urged upon the authorities the passage of an ordinance for the appointment of commissioners to investigate the causes of fires. The Common Council responded with a law to appoint three persons at a salary of one thousand dollars each per annum, who should attend at all fires and immediately thereafter investigate the cause thereof, and file a report of the evidence taken and the result of their investigation.

The ordinance was to go into effect on the first of August, 1838, provided that the sum of four thousand dollars had been previously paid into the city treasury by one or more of the insurance companies for the purpose of defraying the expenses incurred by the commission, which latter should continue in force so long as one or more of the companies should, on or before June 1, in each year, pay a similar amount.

The city, in 1838, was divided into five districts, which were pointed out by the bell as follows:

First district—one stroke of the bell.

Second district—two strokes of the bell.

Third district—three strokes of the bell.

Fourth district—four strokes of the bell.

Fifth district—a continual ringing.

The first district was comprehended by a line from the foot of Murray Street to the City Hall, and in a line from the northwest corner of the City Hall parallel with the North River, to Twenty-first Street.

The second district was bounded by the latter line and a straight line from the City Hall to Third Avenue at Twenty-first Street.

The third district was bounded by the latter and a line from the City Hall to the East River above the dry dock.

The fourth district was bounded by the latter, and comprehended all the space between that and the East River, as far down as Frankfort Street.

The fifth district was all that part of the city below Frankfort and Murray Streets.

The encouraging and well-deserved compliment paid the fire department by Mayor Clark in 1838 was echoed in 1839 by Mayor Isaac L. Varian, who said, in addressing the municipal legislature, that it deserved their fostering care. During the past year the amount of property destroyed by fire was small compared with former years. The introduction of water for the purpose of extinguishing fires through pipes and hydrants had afforded additional facilities to the firemen, and on the plan the pipes were being laid a farther extension of them was deemed advisable, and contracts were made for the supply of six thousand five hundred water pipes.

A proposition was submitted to the legislature in June, 1840, without any application on the part of the Common Council, in regard to the fire department of this city, which was adopted by one branch of that body, but in the other was not acted on and did not become a law. This proposition was to deprive the Common Council of all control over the department, and place it in the hands of persons who were not in any way responsible to the public authorities, while it left the whole expenses of the department to be paid from the treasury. Such a measure was not acceptable to the Common Council, and instead of removing the difficulties which had in former years operated injuriously against the department, would have added, the Council claimed, new ones of a more serious character.

Since 1836 the introduction of political feelings and views into the general management of the Fire Department had materially affected its usefulness, and tended much to produce the evils which the law above referred to was designed to remedy.

It was directed by the Common Council, March 11, 1840, that a cupola and alarm bell be placed on Center Market, and that the expense thereof be paid out of the general appropriation for the Fire Department, and that the superintendent of buildings and repairs, under the direction of the joint committee on fire water, contract for the same.

It was decreed also that a watchman should, at all times, be stationed at the cupola of the City Hall, reservoir, Center, Essex and Jefferson Markets, for the purpose of giv-



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HARRY H. HOWARD
Chief Engineer New York Fire Department, 1857-1860

ing an alarm whenever a fire occurred. The fire and water committee, by and with the consent of the mayor, appointed a competent number of persons to perform such duty by day and night, who were severally removable by the committee. These men were paid for their services, at the rate of two dollars per day, on their bills being certified by the chairman of the fire and water committee.

In the winter of 1841 it was sought to still further amend and modify the laws respecting the fire department. The firemen were to be appointed by and under the control, supervision, etc., of five commissioners, elected and appointed by the representatives of the New York Fire Department, holding office for five years, at one thousand dollars each per annum, to be known as "The Commissioners of the Fire Department of the City of New York," and no person should be appointed as a commissioner who had not served at least five years as a fireman. The commissioners should have power to appoint a chief engineer and seven assistant engineers, subject to removal at any time by said commissioners. They should have power to appoint the firemen, and to purchase all apparatus; to appoint on the recommendation of the alderman and assistant alderman of each ward, five persons to each ward, to be denominated "Fire Policemen;" to appoint two persons as cleaners; and to regulate and fix the salaries of chief and assistant engineers, the fire policemen, and the cleaners.

The salary of the chief engineer, it may be observed here, varied considerably. In 1819 it was \$800 a year; in 1820, \$500; in 1834, \$1,000; in 1838, \$1,200; in 1839, \$500; in 1841, \$1,000; in 1844, \$1,500; in 1848, \$2,000; in 1855, \$3,000, and from 1857 to 1865, \$5,000. Long before 1841 the chief engineer was the appointee of the Common Council, then he became the annual choice of the engineers, foremen and assistant foremen. In 1842 an ordinance was passed by which the chief engineer was nominated by the firemen, appointed by the Common Council, and served until a majority of the firemen desired a new election. At various times there were heated arguments as to the best method of appointing or electing a chief engineer. The citizens showed their interest in the department by joining these discussions through the press. The opinion of the majority prevailed that that important officer should be the selection of the whole department, and so we find that in 1853 a law was passed fixing his election by the firemen, who balloted for him every three years.

The regular firemen continued to be much harassed by so-called volunteer associations, their good name tarnished, and their efforts often frustrated. The Common Council again (November 10, 1841) denounced these volunteer associations and the practice of permitting them to assume the garb of firemen, and to mingle in the duties thereof. This, the ordinance declared, was not only in direct and open violation of the ordinances of the Common Council, but was calculated, in its results, to demoralize the character of youth, and bring reproach upon the department, by the riotous and disorderly conduct in which these young men were so often engaged. Hence, the officers and members of each company were ordered forthwith to disband all associations of volunteers, and upon no occasion to suffer or permit them to have access to the public property; and all magistrates, watchmen and police officers were requested to prevent the congregating of all boys around or in the vicinity of the engine, hose, and hook and ladder houses, to the end that members of the fire department might be recognized as such, and be held responsible for all deviation from the path of duty, and the requirements of the ordinances of the Common Council.

Fire companies were interdicted from removing their apparatus out of the district in which the same was located, below Fourteenth Street, in case of fire, or an alarm of fire, under the penalty of being subject to expulsion or suspension from the fire department, unless they should be permitted so to do by the chief or one or both assistant engineers.

The Common Council, on September 7, 1842, by ordinance, established the offices of a chief engineer, a superintendent of the aqueduct works, a water purveyor, and a register of rents, to hold their respective offices during the pleasure of the Common Council, unless sooner removed for cause by the Croton Aqueduct Board, with the concurrence of the Joint Croton Aqueduct Committee. The chief engineer, under the direction of the Croton Aqueduct Board, had the general executive care and superintendence of the Croton Aqueduct Works.

The superintendent and water purveyor had the care of laying down all the distributing pipes, hydrants, and stop-cocks, under the direction of the chief engineer and Cro-

ton Aqueduct Board; examined into, and reported to the Croton Aqueduct Board all applications for water, and generally did all such duty assigned to them; they attended all fires, provided against all unnecessary waste of water, and saw that all hydrants were closed at the termination of each conflagration.

The salary of the chief engineer was increased to one thousand five hundred dollars per annum.

The introduction of the Croton water into the city called for a thorough reorganization of the department. That worthy and patriotic class of citizens would no longer be required to perform the laborious duty of dragging their engines for miles; and the services of the boys who congregated about the engine houses for the purpose of assisting to convey the engines to the fires would no longer be required. The period had now arrived—the summer of 1842—when the city authorities could, with perfect ease, and with proper regard for the laborious exertions of the fire department, prevent boys and young men, not members of the department, interfering in any manner, with, or performing the duties of firemen. When these excrescences should be lopped off from the department, the high character and worth of the members proper would be at once appreciated, and the people would bear witness to their services and usefulness.

Serious and disgraceful fights and riots had occurred in the autumn of 1843 between different fire companies, principally originating with low and violent characters whose respective companies had been disbanded and broken up by the corporation, and who attached themselves to others on occasions of fires, to create fights and disorder, thus degrading the character and impairing the usefulness and discipline of the fire department. In order to prevent the repetition of such outrages, and effectually protect the respectable and well-disposed, the chief engineer, C. V. Anderson, solicited the Common Council for the establishment of a fire police, consisting of not less than twenty men, who should assemble at each fire to protect property and to suppress tumult.

The Common Council had no power to create such a body, and, therefore, a memorial to the legislature was prepared for authority to do so.

The condition of the fire department in August, 1843, was: thirty-seven engines in good order, two in indifferent order, and two rebuilding; thirty-eight hose carriages in good order, and one rebuilding; eight hook and ladder trucks, with forty-seven ladders and fifty-one hooks, and forty-eight thousand nine hundred feet of hose. There were then in the department thirty-nine engine companies, forty hose companies, eight hook and ladder companies, and three hydrant companies, and one thousand six hundred and sixty-one men.

In March, 1843, in consequence of certain serious disturbances in the department, the disbandment of certain companies, and among others of Engine Company No. 34, was recommended. The evidence concerning the fights between Engine Companies No. 34 and 27 substantiated the allegations of frequent and violent attacks, while not a solitary complaint had been made to the competent authorities, both companies having "preferred to fight it out to calling on the Common Council for protection." Engine Company No. 34 was disbanded, their apparatus returned to the public yards, and their house given to Hose Company No. 40. In May of that year No. 34 was reinstated.

In August, 1844, there were in the department thirty-nine engines in good order, and one in indifferent order; thirty-eight hose carriages in good order, one indifferent, and two building; eight hook and ladder trucks, with forty-six ladders and forty-nine hooks; thirty-one thousand eight hundred and fifty feet of good hose, and six thousand two hundred and fifty feet of hose in ordinary, making in the whole thirty-eight thousand one hundred feet of hose; forty-one engine companies (one of which performed duty with a hose carriage), forty-one hose companies, eight hook and ladder companies, and one hydrant company; one thousand five hundred and eighty-one men.

In May, 1845, there were thirty-nine engines, thirty-eight hose companies, seven hook and ladder companies, and two hydrant companies. Thirty-three of the engines were located below Twenty-eighth Street, and of those thirty were six and one-half cylinder engines, one ten inch, and two nine inch cylinder engines.

The introduction of the Croton water, while it had added vastly to the ability of the department to answer the ends of its organization, had likewise suggested various improvements. Hose carts had been multiplied, and had proved to be in many cases advantageous substitutes for the fire engine. From the lightness of their construction, they

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could be run with much greater facility to points where they were suddenly required, and being able from the hydrants to throw water to the elevation of ordinary buildings, they were found to equal in efficiency for the extinguishment of fires the class of engines principally used before the introduction of the water, and then constituting in numbers the bulk of the engine force.

During the year ending August 1, 1845, there were three hundred and fifty alarms of fire, two hundred and sixty of which called for the employment of the department and its apparatus, and ninety arose from trivial causes. The amount of property destroyed during the same period (excluding the fire, on July 19, in New and Broad Streets) was four hundred and seventy-four thousand eight hundred and thirty dollars. In the month of May and June, alone, there were sixty-seven actual fires.

About 1852 the Common Council adopted an ordinance dividing the city into three fire districts, and confining the apparatus and labors of the firemen to the district in which their apparatus were located. The object of the ordinance was to lessen the duties of the firemen, and to prevent the great destruction of the apparatus which was caused by their being uselessly dragged over the city at every alarm of fire. In consequence, however, of the imperfect alarms of fire, it was considered unsafe to enforce strictly the ordinance.

It was generally conceded that ten thousand dollars per annum was a low estimate of the expense of repairs to the fire apparatus.

During the year ending August 1, 1846, there had been two hundred and fifty-eight fires and one hundred and thirty-nine false alarms of fire. Many of the fires had no doubt been extinguished before the alarm had reached the nearest bell station, yet, in consequence of there being no means afforded of notifying the bell-ringers of the extinguishment of the fire, or that the alarm was a false one, the bells were rung, and the firemen called unnecessarily from their business or their rest, thereby causing a loss of time and money to them and the apparatus dragged for miles over the city, creating a useless expense to the city. The Common Council, in November, 1846, in view of these facts authorized the introduction of Morse's magnetic telegraph into the department.

Action was also taken in the matter at a meeting of the engineers and foremen held December 1, 1846, at which Mr. James L. Miller, of the engineers, offered the following:

Resolved, That a committee of five be appointed from this body to urge upon the members of the Common Council the propriety of adopting the plan recommended by the chief engineer, in relation to the magnetic telegraph for the use of the fire department.

The number of fires was increasing every succeeding year, and occurring, as many of them did, under very suspicious circumstances, it appeared necessary that their origin should be investigated. During the night of the second of May, 1846, within about six hours, ten fires occurred, all of which, except one (the *True Sun* building) commenced in stables, and were no doubt the work of design. Nothing but the extraordinary exertions of the firemen prevented several serious conflagrations.

Successive acts of the legislature had reduced the term of service of firemen, until, on November 16, 1847, a law went into effect making the period of servitude five years.

The various engine, hose, and hook and ladder companies were granted the use of the Croton water, on paying the expenses of the introduction.

Permission was granted (December 2, 1847) to Hugh Downing and Royal E. House to construct a line of telegraph, by setting posts in the ground, and extending from Fort Washington to the Bloomingdale Road, thence along said road to Sixth Avenue to the fire station at Jefferson Market, thence to the fire stations at Centre and Essex Markets, thence to the City Hall, to the Merchants Exchange. This permission was coupled with a proviso that Downing and House should put up the necessary wire and apparatus, and keep the same in order, and give free and perpetual use of the invention for communicating alarms of fires from the City Hall to the different fire stations, and instruct the different bell-ringers in the use of said invention, and commence and continue the communication themselves, until the bell-ringers were instructed, in consideration of which they received from the city the sum of five hundred dollars.

A water tower was erected in this year on the rear of lots on the north side of Twenty-second Street, between First and Second Avenues, and a bell weighing eight thousand pounds placed therein.

A most appalling disaster occurred on the morning of February 4, 1850. A steam

boiler exploded in a large building, 5 and 7 Hague Street, completely demolishing it, and burying beneath its ruins one hundred and twenty persons, of whom sixty-four were killed and forty-eight wounded. The fire department rendered invaluable service in rescuing the imperilled people and in saving adjoining property from destruction by the fire which ensued, for which service they were the recipients of the sincere thanks of the Common Council. Details of this awful calamity will be found elsewhere in this book.

The whole number of complaints of violations of the laws made to the board during the year ending April 1, 1851, amounted to six hundred and fifty-one. The number of old and dangerous buildings examined and reported to the chief engineer of the fire department as being exceedingly dangerous in case a fire should occur in either of them, forty-four. The quantity of gunpowder seized and delivered to the trustees of the fire department was one hundred and fifty-seven kegs and twenty cases, containing fifty canisters each.

On the twenty-fifth of January, 1851, a resolution was approved by the mayor, directing the commissioner of repairs and supplies to contract with Richard H. Bull for the immediate completion of the telegraph wire and apparatus to all the fire alarm stations in the city, and the sum of six hundred dollars was appropriated to pay for the same.

By the act of July 11, 1851, the heads of departments, except the Croton Aqueduct Board, were elected every three years. The heads of departments nominated, and by and with the consent of the Board of Aldermen, appointed the heads of bureaus in their several departments, except the chamberlain, the receiver of taxes, and the chief engineer of the fire department. The chief of the fire department "shall be elected in the same manner as is now or may hereafter be prescribed by law."

The strength of the department on August 1, 1851, was twenty-six engines in good order, three ordinary, four building, and one rebuilding; forty-one hose carriages in good order, two ordinary, and six building; six hook and ladder trucks in good order, and two ordinary; forty ladders, and eighty-five hooks; forty-three thousand three hundred feet of hose in good order, fifteen thousand two hundred feet ordinary; thirty-four engine companies, forty-nine hose companies, eight hook and ladder companies, and three hydrant companies. There were two thousand two hundred and eleven men in the department; if the companies were full there would have been two thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight men.

During the year ending August 1, 1851, there had been three hundred and nineteen fires, by which the loss on buildings amounted to one hundred and fifty-nine thousand four hundred and fifty-five dollars, and on wares five hundred and forty-eight thousand and twenty-three dollars, making the loss by fire seven hundred and seven thousand four hundred and seventy-eight dollars. There had been two hundred and thirty-eight alarms. These facts show an increase of thirty fires and forty-six alarms over the preceding year, but, at the same time, a decrease of five hundred and eighty-seven thousand six hundred and twenty-five dollars in the destruction of property.

The fire companies in the northern section of the city had long suffered great inconvenience for the want of a proper alarm. For their relief an iron tower was built on Thirty-third Street. A lot was procured for the erection of an iron tower in Spring Street, near Varick, which was not needed. The tower on Centre Street was much dilapidated and insecure, with a bell weighing only four thousand pounds. During a high wind, or an alarm, the tower would vibrate in a very noticeable manner. Its demolition was recommended, and a new tower to be put up on the lot where Engine No. 9 was located on Marion Street. The Jefferson Market bell tower was destroyed by fire on the twenty-ninth of July, and an iron tower was erected in its stead.

The connection of the bell towers with Fire Headquarters by telegraph was completed in the summer of 1851. Instantly the effectiveness of the connections was recognized, as the firemen were saved much unnecessary labor by the prevention of the numerous false alarms which had heretofore misled them.

The report of Chief Engineer Alfred Carson in this connection is worth recording. "The entire (telegraphic) apparatus," says Mr. Carson, "is necessarily of very delicate construction, and must be used with great care by the bellringers, or it at once becomes utterly inoperative. And it grieves me to inform you (the Common Council) that the telegraphic apparatus is often seriously injured, either by the bellringers themselves, or by some of their numerous friends who unceasingly visit them, who often use it without

occasion, simply to gratify their curiosity, thereby misleading and creating general confusion at the bell towers throughout the city and, of course, throughout the department."

In December, 1853, the sum of twenty-four thousand eight hundred and eleven dollars was appropriated for a new building for the use of the fire department, to be called "Firemen's Hall," located in Mercer Street, between Prince and Houston Streets.

The following table shows the population of New York City for a number of years:

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Population.</i>	<i>Year.</i>	<i>Population.</i>	<i>Year.</i>	<i>Population.</i>
1674,	3,000	1746,	11,717	1820,	123,706
1678,	3,430	1756,	13,040	1825,	166,000
1703,	4,436	1771,	21,863	1830,	203,007
1712,	5,840	1786,	23,614	1834,	270,089
1723,	7,243	1790,	33,131	1840,	312,710
1731,	8,622	1800,	60,489	1845,	371,223
1737,	10,664	1810,	95,519	1850,	515,394

In 1854 the fire department of New York was composed of nearly four thousand citizens, who devoted their time and exertions to the public service without any reward except the satisfaction derived from the faithful discharge of their duty as citizens. It was conceded that that branch of the civil service possessed the capacity for government in itself at least equal to that of the citizen soldiery who were left in the free and full management and control of their own internal affairs. Besides it was seen that the system of administering the affairs of the fire department through the Common Council was burdensome to the latter body, interfering with its more legitimate business, and had operated in experience unfairly and injuriously to the department, greatly impairing its efficiency. An ordinance was therefore introduced creating a "board of fire department commissioners," composed of three persons from each of the eight sections of the fire districts, and three from that portion of the city known as the Twelfth Ward, two from each district being exempt firemen, and the third one of the active firemen of the city. The chief engineer should be an *ex-officio* member of the board and all its committees.

The venerable Peter Cooper gave some attention to the prevention and extinguishment of fires, and communicated with the Common Council in that respect, February, 1854. The plan and principle which he advocated were designed to make the performance of fire duty a dollar-and-cent interest to some three-quarters of all the officers in the employ of the city government. He recommended the placing a boiler-iron tank, thirty feet in height, on the top of the existing reservoir on Murray Hill. That tank was to be filled, and kept full of water, by a small steam engine. Further, he proposed that the City Hall should be raised an additional story and covered with an iron tank that would hold some ten feet of water, the outside of the tank to be made to represent a cornice around the building. With that greater head and supply of water always at command and ready for connection with the street mains, the moment a signal was given from any police station it was apparent that all the hydrants could be made efficient to raise water over the tops of the highest houses in the city. Also, he would cause to be placed in every street, at convenient distances, a small cart containing some three hundred feet of hose. These carts should be so light that one man could draw them to the nearest hydrant to the fire, and bring water on the fire in the shortest possible time. With that arrangement he proposed to make it the interest of every man in the police to watch incendiaries and thieves, and to use every possible effort to extinguish fires as soon as they had occurred.

Mr. Cooper had presented a similar programme twelve years previously.

In the spring of 1854 there were but one first-class engine in the department, No. 38, nine and one-half inch cylinder: four second-class, Nos. 14, 21, 22, and 42; and three third-class, Nos. 5, 13, and 20. Nos. 14, 21, and 42 were eight and one-half inch cylinder; No. 22, eight inch; Nos. 13, 7, 5, and 20, each six and one-half inches. The complement of men allowed to each company was as follows:

Engine No. 38 (first-class Philadelphia style), nine and one-half inch cylinder, sixty men; No. 22 (second-class piano), eight inch cylinder, fifty men; No. 42 (second-class piano), eight and one-half inch cylinder, fifty men; No. 14 (second-class Philadelphia), eight and one-half inch cylinder, seventy men; No. 21 (second-class Philadelphia), eight and one-half inch cylinder, seventy men; No. 5 (third-class New York style), six and one-half inch cylinder, forty men; No. 13 (third-class New York improved), seven-inch



cylinder, forty men; No. 20 (third-class New York improved), six and one-half cylinder, forty men.

The chief engineer was elected, every three years, by the members of the fire department, by ballot. The election for this office took place on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in February, 1854, and thereafter every succeeding three years.

The chief engineer was ordered not to receive any annual returns from companies but such as had conformed to section first of the ordinance, passed June 22, 1842, relative to the fire department, as follows: "The fire department of the city of New York shall consist of a chief engineer, assistant engineers, fire-enginemmen, hose men, hook and ladder and hydrant men, who shall be citizens of the United States, and twenty-one years of age and upwards.

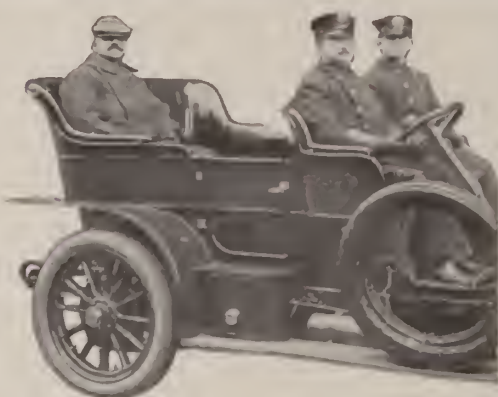
The Common Council instructed the mayor to appoint three persons to act as bell-ringers at each of the different alarm districts, such persons to be selected from among the exempt firemen. The bellringers, so appointed, received as remuneration for their



BURNING OF CRYSTAL PALACE, RESERVOIR SQUARE, 6th AVENUE,
40th to 42d STREETS, OCTOBER 5, 1858

services the sum of five hundred dollars each per annum, and were subject to removal by the mayor for misdemeanor or negligence of duty.

As foreshadowed by the action of the Board of Aldermen in their attempt to dismiss Carson, chief engineer, from office, notwithstanding that numerous petitions from fire companies had requested such action, seemingly justifying it, there was yet a dormant feeling of dissatisfaction which manifested itself only after the inauguration of the new Council in 1854. In February of that year a committee of representatives of the fire department, Carlisle Norwood, D. Milliken and Henry W. Belcher, presented a petition to the new board, setting forth that during the preceding three or four years serious and gross abuses had crept into the department, by which not only its morals had been impaired, but its efficiency and discipline had been destroyed. The great majority of the firemen were of every vocation, the merchant, mechanic, artisan, from the professional and laboring classes; and that majority in point of character and respectability would



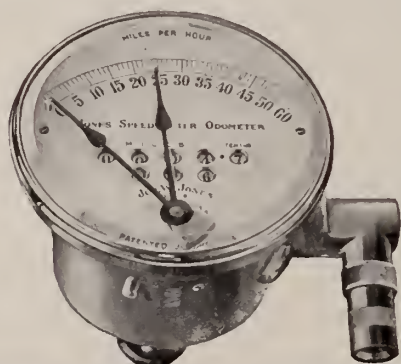
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challenge comparison with any other institution in the country. Their aim was to discharge the self-imposed duty with fidelity, and to elevate the character of their body; but to accomplish that they should be sustained by the authorities. That support had not been accorded for the preceding few years; for owing to a personal difficulty between the head of the department and the municipal government, the latter had by every means in their power set at defiance the authority of the former, disregarded his recommendations, and thus given every encouragement to the riotous and disorderly to carry out their infamous and wicked designs without restraint. The result was that the department, which should have been the pride and boast of the city, had become a by-word and reproach; charges of a heinous nature were freely made against some of its members through the public prints, which want of power on the part of the department prevented them from investigating.

In connection with this matter a special meeting of the representatives of the fire department was held in Firemen's Hall on February 13, 1854, at which resolutions were adopted, stating that among the causes which had mainly brought about the deplorable condition of the department had been prominently the flagrant conduct of the city government, which, instead of endeavoring to preserve the discipline and character of the department, had done all in their power to destroy them by the indiscriminate creation of firemen, the restoration to membership of men expelled for bad conduct, the encouragement and license given to the riotous and disorderly by their neglect to punish them when brought before them; in a word, by the wholesale abuse of their authority to gratify personal ends and political purposes.

On the fourth of May, 1854, it was stated in a daily newspaper in regard to the Broadway catastrophe, that the chief engineer testified that within his knowledge a gang of men, wearing the garb of firemen, attended fires for the purpose of stealing; that he had known members of the fire department to be caught thieving; and in one case of a member expelled for stealing at a fire the Common Council had reinstated him; that a member, then foreman of an engine company, had been thus expelled and reinstated; that sometimes persons had attended fires dressed as firemen, though not members of the department; and that, in his judgment, more than one-half the fires that had occurred were the work of incendiaries.

The Common Council requested the chief engineer to inform them whether he had been correctly reported. He replied, on May 15, 1854, that if the evidence had been fully and correctly reported their inquiry would have been unnecessary. His reference to the reinstatement of persons expelled for theft applied to the Common Council of 1853 and not to that of 1854. Attempts had been made to establish the fact that some of the persons killed were in the building for the purpose of stealing instead of extinguishing the fire, and that clothing recognized by the proprietors of the store as belonging to their stock was found upon some of the bodies. That was published far and wide, and made the occasion of severe comments on the fire department. The evidence adduced, however, showed that no clothing whatever from the establishment was found upon any of the bodies, except such as was placed under and upon them by their comrades after rescuing them from the ruins, in order that they might be carried to the hospital as comfortably as possible.

The following complement of men was allowed the different engine, hose, and hook and ladder companies, viz.: First-class engines, sixty men; second-class engines, fifty men; third-class engines, forty men; hose companies, twenty-five men; hook and ladder companies, forty men. Hydrant companies to remain the same as previously.

The strength of the department in September, 1854, consisted of thirty-three engines in good order, seven ordinary, and eight building; forty-three hose carriages in good order, seven ordinary, and six building; nine hook and ladder trucks in good order, two ordinary, and one building. The trucks were supplied with all necessary implements. There were in use forty thousand six hundred and fifty feet of good hose, and fifteen thousand eight hundred feet ordinary; forty-eight engine companies, fifty-seven hose companies, fourteen hook and ladder companies, and four hydrant companies; two thousand nine hundred and fifty-five men. If all the companies were full, there would have been four thousand four hundred and eighty men.

During the year ending September, 1854, there had been three hundred and eighty-five fires, with a loss on buildings of eight hundred and twenty-seven thousand and

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twelve dollars, and on wares two million and seventy-three thousand two hundred and seventy-two dollars. There had been two hundred and twenty-one additional alarms, mostly caused by burning chimneys, spirit-gas explosions, etc., while for the residue no real cause could be ascertained. The loss was large compared with former years. Doubtless one-half the fires were the result of incendiarism, and one-quarter of carelessness.

Captain Ditchett, of the Fourth Ward police, proposed for the better prevention of personal injury and loss of life, and of interference with the firemen while on duty, that policemen be stationed with flags by day and lighted signals at night at proper distances on the streets leading to fires, and all persons passing, or who persisted in remaining within, the lines, should be arrested, unless they had business there. To adopt that plan it would be necessary to procure a badge for the department, to be worn by members when not in fire dress; and a law should be passed making it a penal offense for any person to wear the badge, or other insignia of the department, except firemen, which would act as a salutary check on rowdies and thieves prowling about fires, and enable the firemen to discharge their duties more effectively.

The State Legislature enacted a law, March 29, 1855, by which five commissioners were elected by the fire department, and to be known as "The Commissioners of the New York Fire Department." The commissioners so elected drew for the term of their respective offices, say, one for the term of five years; one for the term of three years; one for the term of two years; and one for the term of one year; "and, annually thereafter, there shall be elected one commissioner to hold his office for the term of five years."

No person was eligible as such commissioner unless, at the time of election, he was an exempt fireman, and had ceased to be a member of the fire department, for at least three years prior to said election. Their duty consisted in inquiring into all applications for the organization of volunteer fire companies; no volunteer fire companies could be organized unless approved by said commissioners; unless—in case of disagreement by the commissioners—a three-fourths vote of all members should overrule the decision of the commissioners.

The corporation of the fire department, by act of the Legislature, April 3, 1855, were permitted to hold real and personal estate, but not to exceed the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

Members of the fire department (ordinance June 14, 1855), were required, when on duty as firemen, to wear the leathern cap, as previously in use, or a badge. The badge was made of Prince's metal, bearing the words, "New York Fire Department," each badge bearing a distinct number, in raised figures thereon, of white metal. The badge worn by exempt firemen was composed of white metal, with the figures thereon of Prince's metal, but in all other respects similar to the badge used by the active members of the department. Said badges were struck from separate dies and numbered as the commissioners of the fire department might direct.

This ordinance made it the duty of the police, when a fire occurred, to form a line, at least two hundred feet distant from the said fire, on either side thereof; and under no circumstances should they permit any person to pass said line, unless said person should wear the uniform or badge of the fire department, the uniform of the insurance patrol, or be a member of the Common Council, a member of the police department, or an owner or resident of property within the prescribed lines.

The salary of the chief engineer was increased to the sum of three thousand dollars per annum.

In August, 1856, the state of the department had never been so encouraging or its working more perfect, and that, too, while laboring under many disadvantages. The department consisted of fourteen engineers, one thousand six hundred and forty-four engine men, one thousand one hundred and twenty-eight hose men, three hundred and sixty-six hook and ladder men, and thirty-three hydrant men, amounting to a total of three thousand and eighty-five men, an increase of four hundred and fifty-four over the roll of 1855. These were divided into forty-six engine companies, fifty-eight hose companies, fourteen hook and ladder companies, and four hydrant companies. There were thirty-five engines in good condition, five ordinary, five building, and one rebuilding; forty-nine hose carriages in good condition, six ordinary, two building, and one rebuilding; twelve hook and ladder trucks in good condition, and two building. There was a total of sixty-eight thousand seven hundred and fifty feet of hose in use.



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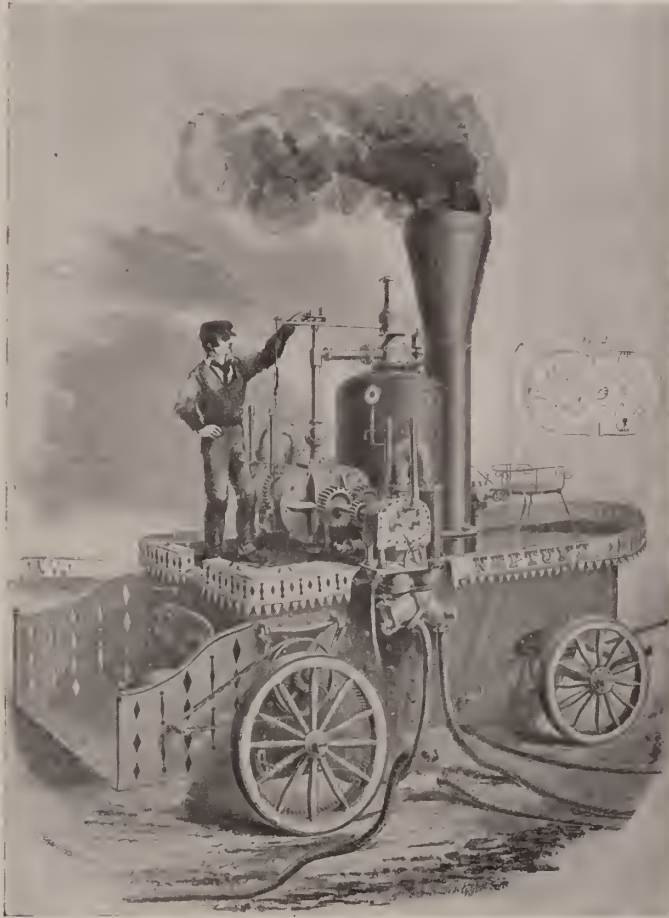
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The loss by fires during the year ending July 31, 1856, was six hundred and thirty-two thousand and thirty dollars, being a decrease of five hundred and thirty-five thousand and eighty-nine dollars from 1855.

The rowdies had for a long time remained quiet, and it was hoped that the department would not again be molested by them. But of late three attacks had been made. In one case Engine Company No. 41 were proceeding at great haste to a fire, when they were set upon by these miscreants with clubs, slung-shots, and stones. Several members of the department were knocked down, one of whom was run over by the engine and seriously injured. Another, Hose Company No. 15, were attacked while attending to their duty, the men driven away, and the carriage upset in the street. The third was an



FIRST SILBLY STEAM FIRE ENGINE, TESTED AT CRYSTAL PALACE, 1856

attack on the engine house of Company No. 32 by a gang of rowdies. It was useless to look to the police justices for redress, for it was well known they dared not grant it, the political influence of the gangs being so great.

An ordinance to reorganize the fire department was introduced in July, 1856. It provided, among other things, for one chief engineer, eighteen assistants, and as many fire engine men, hook and ladder men, and hose men that were then or might thereafter be appointed by the Common Council in accordance with the provisions of "An act for the better regulation of the firemen in the city of New York," passed March 29, 1855. The chief and his assistants should severally be elected by the firemen by ballot. The first election for chief engineer should take place on the first Tuesday after the first Mon-



day in February, 1857, and thereafter every three years; and the first election for assistant engineers on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in June, 1857. The chief engineer should at the time of his election be a fireman who had served the full term prescribed by law; should receive a yearly salary of three thousand dollars. Each of the assistants should be a fireman who had served three years, and should be an actual resident of the district in which he was nominated, and for which he was elected.

No fireman, while under suspension for any violations of the provisions of the ordinance, should be permitted to wear a fire cap bearing the frontispiece of the company to which he was attached nor allowed to vote, nor permitted to frequent the house occupied by the company, or take part in any of the meetings of the said company.

At the quarterly meeting of the Board of Engineers and Firemen, held September 4, 1856, it was decided that the number of men at that time allowed to the different fire companies, namely, first-class engines, sixty men; second-class, fifty men; third-class, forty men; hose companies, twenty-five men; and hook and ladder companies, forty men, was sufficient to perform the necessary duties of the respective companies, and that any further addition to companies by the Common Council would be prejudicial to the best interests of the fire department.

This action was deemed necessary because of a resolution adopted by the Board of Councilmen to increase the force of Hose Company No. 9 five men, on the face of the remonstrance and protest of the chief engineer of the department. The Board of Aldermen concurred in the action of their legislative brethren, and filed away the communication of the fire chief for future action on the kalends of February.

Harry Howard, of No. 108 Leonard Street, was elected chief engineer on February 3, 1857.

In January, 1858, the fire department was composed of fifty-two engine companies, sixty-two hose companies, fifteen hook and ladder companies, and four hydrant companies, with a force of over two thousand men. The estimate for that year for apparatus, and their repairs, etc., was sixty thousand dollars, and fifty thousand dollars for expenditures for buildings and repairs to them, salaries, and lighting the engine and other houses. The real estate and houses on leased ground belonging to the corporation, in use by the department, were valued at three hundred thousand dollars, and the apparatus at seventy-five thousand dollars, the interest of which, at six per cent., would amount annually to twenty-two thousand five hundred dollars, making the total yearly cost of protecting the city against fires, independent of the use of the water and hydrants, about one hundred and thirty-two thousand five hundred dollars.

The voluntary service of the members of the department frequently bestowed at the hazard, and often the sacrifice, of their lives, had given them a strong claim to the good will of the Common Council and of the citizens generally.

The introduction of the steam fire engines into the department had been the subject of consideration for the preceding two years, and an appropriation was made in 1857 of nineteen thousand five hundred dollars for the purpose of testing the experiment. But no definite steps had as yet been taken toward purchasing any apparatus of that description.

On the fourteenth of April, 1858, an act was passed by the legislature extending and continuing in force until May, 1880, unless sooner altered, modified or repealed, the act incorporating the firemen of the city of New York, passed March 20, 1798, and all acts and parts of acts relating to said incorporation.

In February, 1858, one year after the selection of Chief Howard, the department consisted of fourteen engineers, one thousand eight hundred and fifty members of engine companies, one thousand two hundred and fifty-seven members of hose companies, and four hundred and fifty-two members of hook and ladder companies; making a total of three thousand five hundred and fifty-nine men, an increase of four hundred and seventy-four over the number on the rolls one year before. These were divided into forty-eight engine companies, sixty hose companies, and fifteen hook and ladder companies. There were forty-nine engines in good condition, nine ordinary, and two rebuilding; forty-three hose carriages in good condition, sixteen ordinary; eleven hook and ladder trucks in good condition, and four ordinary; twenty-seven hose tenders in good condition, seven ordinary and fifteen building. There were in use thirty-three thousand four



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hundred feet of hose in good order, thirty-seven thousand four hundred and fifty feet in ordinary condition, and ten thousand four hundred feet in very bad condition.

There was a large decrease in the amount of losses by fire during 1857 as compared with 1856. Total number of fires for the year ending July 31, 1856, three hundred and fifty-four; alarms, one hundred and nine; total loss by fire, six hundred and thirty-two thousand and thirty dollars. Total number of fires from February 17, 1857, to February 17, 1858, three hundred and twenty-two; alarms, one hundred and ninety-eight; total loss by fire, four hundred and twenty-eight thousand two hundred and sixty-six dollars.

All hook and ladder companies (ordinance January 7, 1857), were allowed ten additional men; all the hose companies, thirty men; all first-class engines, seventy men; second-class, sixty men; and third-class, fifty men.

The Street Department superintended the making of, repairing, and lighting the public roads and avenues; constructing, repairing, and lighting the public buildings; repairing wells and pumps; supplying the public rooms and offices of the corporation, the court rooms, the police station houses, the engine, hose, and hook and ladder houses; and the public markets, with fuel, stationery, printing, and all other things necessary therefor; constructing and repairing fire engines, hose carts, hooks and ladders, hose, and other machines and apparatus for the use of the fire department. There were two bureaus in the Street Department, namely, a bureau for the building and repairing of wharves and piers, called the Bureau of Wharves; a bureau for constructing and repairing the public buildings, and repairing of wells and pumps; for the supplying of public rooms and offices of the corporation, the court rooms, the police station houses, the engine, hose, and hook and ladder houses, and public markets, with fuel, stationery, printing, and all other things necessary therefor, called the "Bureau of Repairs and Supplies;" a bureau for repairing engines and fire apparatus, under the direction of the chief engineer.

While proceeding to a fire in July, 1857, Chief Engineer Harry Howard was attacked with paralysis, the consequence of severe fire duty which he had previously performed.

An ordinance for the better regulation of the Fire Department went into operation on March 29, 1858. It became the duty of firemen to prevent boys or disorderly characters from congregating in or about the place of deposit of the various apparatus, and not to allow the said place of deposit to be used for any other purposes than those directly connected with the performance of their duty as firemen. No persons other than members and exempt members of the company, or of the Fire Department, in good standing, were allowed to sleep in any engine, hose, or hook and ladder house; the street doors should not be kept open, except while persons were passing in and out, or while any necessary repairs or cleaning were being performed. Good order should be preserved in and about the houses occupied by their respective companies. In going to or returning from a fire, the drag-rope was the proper place for the firemen, except the officers in command. These should prevent all boys and noisy improper persons from taking hold of the rope. On no account should a person, other than a member of the company, or a member or exempt member of the Fire Department, known to at least two of the members of the company present, be allowed to manage or have any control of the tongue or tiller of any apparatus in going to or returning from a fire. The officers and members of each and every company, when returning with their apparatus from a fire, or alarm of fire, were warned against any racing of their company with any other company, and cautioned to abstain from any conduct that would be likely to cause a breach of the peace, or reflect discredit on the fire department. Also it should be their duty to use all endeavors to cultivate good feeling among the members.

The working organization of the fire department in February, 1859, consisted of fourteen engineers; one thousand nine hundred and twenty-two members of engine companies; one thousand two hundred and sixty-two members of hose companies; and five hundred and two members of hook and ladder companies; a total of three thousand seven hundred men, an increase of one hundred and forty-one over the previous year. The number of men allowed to each company were to first-class engine companies, seventy men; second-class, sixty men; third-class, fifty men; hook and ladder, fifty men; and hose, thirty men. The amount of loss by fire showed an increase over 1858.

The department had been much agitated on the subject of steam fire engines, and the merits of the innovation on hand power had been freely commented upon not only

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in the department, but by all classes of citizens. The Common Council had for the use of the city two large steam fire engines from Messrs. Lee & Larned, patentees. Those engines had been completed and experimental exhibitions of their powers had been given at different times. They had also been put in practical operation on two occasions, namely, at the fire in Duane Street on the evening of January 17, 1859, and at the fire in South Street on January 24. But these tests failed to satisfy the members of the department of the value of the steam fire engines, who stated that the expectations hoped from their introduction had not been in any manner realized.

At a meeting of the representatives of the New York Fire Department held on May 20, 1859, the following persons were elected commissioners:

Thomas Lawrence for the full term of five years, in place of John W. Schenck, whose term of office had expired. John J. Gorman, to serve four years, in place of Nelson D. Thayer, resigned. Ernest W. Brown, to serve two years, in place of Robert H. Ellis, resigned; and William M. Tweed, to serve two years, in place of William Wright, resigned.



OLD HOUSES AT THE JUNCTION OF SPRING, MARION AND ELM STREETS
GOING TO A FIRE AT CENTRE MARKET, 1861

The several fire insurance companies doing business in the city made a proposition to the city government to furnish and present a steam fire engine to the corporation. This proposition was accepted on the eighth of February, 1859.

John Decker succeeded Harry Howard as chief engineer of the department in February, 1860. The working force then consisted of fourteen engineers, two thousand two hundred and thirty-four members of engine companies, one thousand four hundred and eleven members of hose companies, five hundred and eighty-two members of hook and ladder companies, making a total of four thousand two hundred and twenty-seven men, an increase of five hundred and twenty-seven over the force of 1859. These were divided into fifty engine companies, fifty-six hose companies, and seventeen hook and ladder companies.

Chief Decker, as well as his predecessor, took up the controversy on the subject of steam fire engines for the department, condemning their use. He said that at large fires

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they were serviceable auxiliaries to the hand engines, but they could never take the place of the hand apparatus, as eight fires out of every ten that occurred were brought under subjection by the quickness of operation of the hand engines, so that there was no necessity for placing the steamers to work.

A resolution was introduced in the Board of Aldermen at the meeting held on January 10, 1861, directing that the legislature be memorialized for the passage of an act transferring the entire government of the fire department from the mayor, aldermen, and commonality of the city of New York to the Board of Fire Commissioners, reserving only to the mayor, etc., the control, supervision, and ownership of the real estate, buildings and apparatus of the department. The proposition was lost by a vote of six to eleven.

It had been represented to the Board of Aldermen that the Commissioners of the fire department had neglected and refused to report to the Common Council for approval their proceedings in the investigation of charges against members of the department, with their decision thereon, claiming and insisting under authority of the laws creating the Board of Commissioners, passed March 29, 1855, as amended by the act of March 2, 1861, and their decisions were final and conclusive.

The Common Council regarded such claim as being derogatory of their authority and repugnant to the spirit of the laws, which provided an appeal from the decisions of all tribunals of inferior and limited jurisdiction, and decided to take steps to establish its falsity.

There was a force of four thousand and forty men in the department in June, 1861. The total number of fires for the year ending May 31, 1861, was four hundred and three, and the total loss one million three hundred and forty-seven thousand two hundred and ninety-seven dollars, one-third of which was lost at one fire in Warren Street, in November, 1860. The following companies had been provided and were doing duty with steam fire engines. Nos. 2, 6, 7, 8, 26, 28, 38, 42, 46, 47, and exempt engine and hose company No. 57. In addition to those, the Common Council had authorized the providing of steam engines for companies Nos. 5, 21, 33, and hose company No. 52, making a total of sixteen steamers, which was considered a sufficient number for any ordinary emergency.

Never since the organization of the fire department had that institution been in a more thriving condition, nor had its prospects presented a fairer aspect than in 1862. During the year the general conduct of the members had been exceptionally good, the causes of complaint being fewer than in any preceding year, and the several companies appearing to vie with each other in their endeavors to uphold before the whole community the long established, generally good reputation of the organization. The working force consisted of three thousand eight hundred and fourteen men, a decrease of four hundred and thirteen from 1861. The total number of fires for the year was three hundred and eleven; and the total loss one million four hundred and twenty-eight thousand five hundred and eighty-four dollars.

A large fire occurred in January, 1862, at the corner of Fulton and Pearl Streets. Owing chiefly to the large quantities of oils stored in two of the buildings, the fire spread with such fearful rapidity that it was only by the most extraordinary exertions on the part of the firemen that the city was saved from a conflagration second only to those of 1835 and 1845.

On a requisition made upon him by the Secretary of War, Mayor Opdyke dispatched to Fortress Monroe, in Virginia, on April 17, the two powerful hand engines built for and used by engine companies Nos. 16 and 31. Assistant Engineer John Baulch, together with two members from each company, proceeded to Fortress Monroe with the apparatus, and were employed to take charge of them.

The gross expenditure for the department for the year 1862 amounted to three hundred and eighty thousand five hundred and twelve dollars and fifty-six cents; for the year 1861 it amounted to three hundred and thirty-seven thousand eight hundred and ninety-one dollars and seventy-eight cents, showing an increase for 1862 of forty-two thousand six hundred and twenty dollars and seventy-eight cents. Much of this expenditure was incurred for fire machines and apparatus, including a number of steam engines.

At a meeting of the representatives of the New York Fire Department, held on May 12, 1863, John J. Gorman was elected fire commissioner for the ensuing five years.

During the year 1862-63 the loss by fire amounted to one million one hundred and

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ninety-one thousand nine hundred and twenty-two dollars. The number of fires was two hundred and sixty-eight.

The working force of the department at the close of the year 1863-64 numbered three thousand nine hundred and sixty men, a decrease of two hundred and sixty-two from the previous year. The total loss amounted to two million nine hundred and thirty-five thousand and fifty-four dollars. The increase in loss was principally due to the numerous fires that occurred during the riots of 1863, the amount for July alone footing up one million one hundred and twenty-five thousand and sixty-eight dollars.

Intimation was given early in the year 1865 of the change that was soon to take place in the constitution of the fire department. Certainly no city in the world possessed a more complete fire organization in the number of engines, the effectiveness of the steam machines, the copious supply of water, or the gallant army of volunteers directing these means for the preservation of property. The generosity and public spirit of the firemen could not be more highly appreciated, and nothing could efface the glorious records of their previous history, so full of instances of heroic, daring and unselfish toil. Many of its friends, however, were of the opinion that the system so admirably adapted to a small city was not suited to a metropolis, and that economy, as well as the new machinery, demanded a change.

On March 30, 1865, the legislature passed an act creating a "Metropolitan Fire Department." On the thirty-first of March Chief Engineer Decker sent a communication to the Common Council requesting instructions in relation thereto. As some time would necessarily elapse before the new system could be properly and efficiently placed in a position to meet all that would be required therefrom in respect to the full protection of the lives and property of the citizens—the substitution of a paid system in place of the volunteer organization—and as much suffering, and perhaps loss of life, might ensue in case of a disastrous conflagration unless the volunteer organizations were continued in service, the Common Council urged upon the officers and members of the department the public necessity of their still continuing their previous energetic and humane efforts in arresting on all occasions as heretofore the progress of the devouring element, thereby not only preventing thousands of helpless women and children from being rendered homeless and destitute, but wreathing around the memory of the volunteer organization of the New York Fire Department a record of fame and usefulness of which both themselves and their children in after time might well be proud.

The four commissioners appointed under the act organized on May 2. Immediately the Attorney-General of the State in his official capacity and on behalf of the people, sued out an injunction, enjoining them from taking possession of the city's property, also a writ of *quo warranto*, compelling them to show by what warrant they held their office as fire commissioners (the Attorney-General believing that the said "Metropolitan Fire Law" was unconstitutional).

The matter was tried in the Supreme Court, and finally carried to the Court of Appeals at Albany. That court on the twenty-second of June deciding the law constitutional, the commissioners took possession of the department immediately.

The commission consisted of Charles C. Pinckney, president; James W. Booth, Philip W. Engs, and Martin B. Brown.

As time rolls on the interest in the old fire department of New York seems to deepen. There is nothing like the institution in the history of any other city of this continent or in fact in Europe. So, too, does the new department stand head and shoulders above any fire department in the world. The doings of both make a chronicle more interesting than any romance or novel. Apart from the dry records of fires attended by



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the old fire laddies, and the details of the establishment of the volunteers, are incidents and stories worthy of the attention of posterity. Not only to the student of the manners and customs of bygone times, but to the general reading public are these matters full of interest, and which never weary in the retelling. These facts the writer has gathered from the most reliable sources. Men over whose heads the snows of eighty winters and more have passed have contributed their experience. Others whom we would call old, but whom the octogenarians consider youthful, have likewise added their quota of information. In these and the succeeding chapters we propose to place before the reader a picture of the life of the volunteers, and a graphic sketch of the paid department. The fights, the songs, the brave deeds, and the social life of the firemen are here set down, we hope, in the plain and simple language of the impartial historian.

For more than half a century the volunteers embraced the very best classes of the citizens of New York. Subsequently their numbers were augmented by "runners," unofficial firemen, of a different grade, who, though no less zealous in the performance of duty, were full of fun, frolic and fight, making the history of their times decidedly lively. Among the distinguished names in the Mutual Assistance Bag Company, which was organized in 1803, and was the forerunner of the present fire insurance patrol, were those of the Bleekers, Beekmans, Cuttings, De Peysters, Irvings, Laights, Roosevelts, Stuyvesants, Swartwouts, and Ten Eycks.

Among other well-known names of citizens, highly respected, who were in the old fire department, are those of Zophar Mills, George T. Hope, president of the Continental Fire Insurance Company; W. L. Jenkins, president of the Bank of America; Carlisle Norwood, president of the Lorillard Fire Insurance Company; Jordan L. Mott, the well-known merchant; Thomas Monahan, president of the Fulton Bank (of Engine Company No. 4, afterwards of Hose Company No. 1); Frederic E. Gilbert, capitalist and philanthropist, foreman of No. 4, founder of the New York Club and for twelve years its president. In 1841 Mr. Gilbert acted as a second to Mr. William Heyward, of South Carolina, when the latter fought a duel with August Belmont. Peter and Robert Goelet, the millionaires, belonged to Engine Company No. 9; Morris Franklin, president of the New York Life Insurance Company, was foreman of No. 25 (known as the "brass back engine"), and had several narrow escapes from death; James F. Wenman, ex-park commissioner; William H. Webb, the shipbuilder, ran with Live Oak No. 44; John R. Steers, who built the yacht *America*, was also a member of Engine No. 44; John W. Degrau, who was born in 1797. At the time of the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition it was proposed to send to that city a delegation of the veteran firemen, but not a man could be found who was not his junior. After the fire of 1835 Mr. Degrau raised two hose companies and one thousand six hundred dollars for the purpose in one day. He could remember catching fish the whole length of what is now known as Canal Street, from Broadway to the North River. His playmates were the Roosevelts, the Goelets, the Irvings—Washington Irving's father kept a dry-goods store in William Street—General Morris, Drake, the poet, and Mr. Hackett, the actor. Then there was Adam W. Spies, the successful hardware merchant, now eighty-six years old and wealthy. Mr. Spies was president of the Stuyvesant Insurance Company, had travelled over Europe, an amateur artist of no inconsiderable talent and full of information on a variety of subjects. He was a member of Engine Company No. 5, and a fire warden.

Some of the old firemen have found congenial occupation on Jersey Heights, such as Charles Merrill, formerly secretary of Columbia Hose Company No. 9; Larry Welsh, foreman of Howard Engine Company No. 34; James R. Tate, formerly foreman of Marion Engine Company No. 9 ("Old Rock"). In Hoboken, there are David Satters, formerly of Harry Howard Hose Company No. 55, now foreman of Hoboken Engine Company No. 1; Gus Willis, of old Empire Engine Company No. 42, now of Hoboken Engine Company No. 1; E. Gilkyson, formerly of Neptune Hose Company No. 27; Sam Arcer and James Kenny, now chief engineer of the Hoboken Fire Department.

Of the quality of the old firemen, Mr. William Brandon, speaking in 1884, remarked: "The majority of people have no idea of the number of judges, aldermen, prominent officials, and millionaires they see and hear of in the city of New York who were firemen once, lithe, agile, and careless of themselves as they climbed the ladder in summer to the roof of all houses, handled the almost frozen hose in the depths of winter, when it was like sheet-iron, and encountered danger and death at all seasons." Thomas Coman,

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of Engine Company No. 13, rose to be president of the Board of Aldermen; so did Alderman Kirk of the same company; of Hose Company No. 60 were John Clancy, editor of the *Leader*, subsequently county clerk; Congressman Morgan Jones, Supervisor Walter Roach, and Police Captain Edward Walsh.

James F. Wenman, the ex-park commissioner, later treasurer of the Veteran Firemen's Association, whose headquarters are in East Tenth Street, was one of the most active of the old firemen. In 1876 he saved the life of a servant girl. It was at a fire at the New York Club house. The girl had endeavored to escape by going out on the broad ledge of the main cornice. The flames were behind her, and a step would have precipitated her to the pavement, seventy feet below. The firemen had reared an extension ladder, but it was found to be ten or twelve feet too short. Mr. Wenman made his way to the roof, seized the girl, and half pulling, half dragging her, finally succeeded in getting her to the roof of an adjoining building.

The fireman's pride in his profession was demonstrated in a thousand and one ways, and also was his fond regard for the seemingly sole object of his affection outside of his domestic relations. As one of the numerous illustrations that could be given, it is related that Foreman Thomas Conner of Clinton Engine Company No. 41, being compelled through illness to resign his office, expressed the hope in his letter of resignation, October 9, 1837, that with their new engine soon to arrive, his company would be able "to cope with anything that runs on four wheels." "When you bring her home," he added, "I hope I will be able to help you escort her to the house. I am in hopes when the new machine arrives, at the first alarm of fire at night to see that double rope that you have been so long talking about, manned inside and out, with young Gulick ranged ahead with the old 'Stagg,' placing the animal in the most conspicuous style. I shall try to take her out the first night."

Benjamin Strong, whose term of service began as far back as 1791 and continued up to 1822, was one of the most enthusiastic volunteers. His heart and soul were engrossed in the pursuit, and his activity was unremitting. At the first stroke of the alarm bell, even at night, and even when age was beginning to make its enfeebling influences apparent, he donned his fire cap and joined the hastening throng of his hardy and intrepid comrades. He communicated his enthusiasm to his sons and daughters, who took an honorable pride in their father's devotion to duty. Even after he had resigned from the department, he was always disappointed not to be called from his bed when there had been a night alarm.

An amusing story is told of how a distinguished member of the Association of Exempt Firemen came to join the department. It was about seventy years ago that the occurrence took place. An "Old Vamp," then in his prime, was sitting in a tavern in Nassau Street, when he heard some of the boys talking about joining an association. He then thought he would like to belong to something or other. So, when he went home, he told his mother that he wanted to join a society, he did not much care what it was. There was a great revival going on in these days in the old Duane Street church, and, like all good mothers, she told him to come along with her and join the church. "Well," said he, "I don't particularly care what it is, but I must belong to something." So down to the church he went, but the minister told him he must go on probation for three months before he could join. When the three months had expired, he called on the "Dominie," but was still told that he must wait two months longer. Some three months passed, when the deacon met our friend walking down Hudson Street, in a neat red shirt and a fancy pair of suspenders, bearing a number upon his back, and a coat thrown over his arm. "Ah!" said the deacon, "you are the one I want to see. You have not been to the church of late." "No, deacon, that probation was too long for me." "But," said the deacon, "your probation is at an end; you can now join the church." "Too late, deacon, too late. I've joined an engine company down here, and its going to take all my time to look after fires. I'm laying for one now. You see I was bound to join something, and these fellows let me in without any probation; all I had to do was to shake down my little two dollars and I was called a member. Call around to see us, deacon. We have got as bully a little engine as ever stretched into a fire."

Considering the superior class of men composing the volunteer department, the morals of the members must necessarily have been of a corresponding kind. This will

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be readily understood from some peculiar entries made in the minute books of the companies. For instance, in the book of Engine Company No. 21 is found the following: "Wm. A. Baker reports Mr. Crossthwaite as saying, 'Damn the odds.' The secretary reports Mr. W. A. Baker for saying to John E. Norris (during an altercation between the two), 'You be damned, you damned old Dutch hog.'" As nothing but the very gravest matters are recorded in the minutes, it is clear that the offense of using impolite language is the worst the fire laddies of that period (1810) can be accused of. It would seem that these old volunteers had quite a profound veneration for their engine houses, from the rules and regulations they made for the maintenance of discipline. Under date of February 10, 1830, we find on the minutes of Engine Company No. 13, that Mr. Tonnele was fined twice for swearing and once for chewing. Chewing! What would our valued firemen of to-day say if the commissioners passed such a resolution as the following, which appears on the book of No. 13, on November 28, 1829:

Resolved, That if any member be found smoking a segar or chewing tobacco in the engine house at any time, he shall be fined twenty-five cents for every offense.

Such an order would, undoubtedly, cause a conflagration to-day. "What!" said a fireman to the writer, "fire without smoke? Never! It is against the laws of nature." Time after time were the men fined for a breach of this rule, the occurrence always being gravely recorded on the minutes. Poor Tonnele appears to have been a slave to the weed and forfeited many a dollar for the sake of a "quid." Swearing was regarded as heinous as chewing. One of the by-laws of Pearl Hose Company No. 28, in 1854, was: "If any member while on duty or at meetings, shall persist in improper conduct, or in using profane or improper language, he shall be expelled, provided that two-thirds of the members present vote therefor."

The temperance societies of 1840 made an effort to win over the firemen, and in a measure succeeded. Almost all the members of Engine Company No. 18 signed the pledge, and became ardent propagandists. They were encouraged and rewarded by the Ninth Warders, who presented them with a silken banner. The presentation took place in the Methodist Episcopal Church in Bedford Street, and it was a great day for the boys. The banner was presented by Miss Downey, sister of Captain Jack Downey (afterwards of the Fire Zouaves). The fire laddies entered the church in their uniform, and were seated in the front pews.

No chief had ever so great a hold upon the firemen as James Gulick had. We refer in the chapter upon fires to the refusal of the men to work after the great fire of December, 1835, when the Common Council deposed him from office. Here is another instance of the affection the boys had for him. It was in the beginning of the same year, January 4, that a fire broke out in Centre Street, adjoining the works of the New York Gas Company, which destroyed two houses. Against the gable end of one of the burning buildings a large number of barrels of rosin were piled. The firemen worked diligently to save these by rolling them into the street, and the night being intensely cold, some one kindled a small fire in the street with a part of the contents of a broken barrel, which the workmen employed by the gas company attempted to extinguish. They were warned by the firemen to desist, and a big, heavy fellow, who insisted upon putting out the fire, was shoved away. Thereupon a large number of his friends attacked the few firemen around the fire. Other firemen flew to the assistance of their comrades, and a regular fight ensued. The laddies conquered. Gulick heard of the affair, and, hastening to the scene, exclaimed: "What does all thi shameful conduct mean at this moment?" One of the workmen flew at him and struck him from behind over the head with an iron bar. His fire-cap, however, protected him from serious injury. Turning upon his assailant the powerful chief pursued him across the ruins of the fallen wall, and threw him upon the bricks. Immediately some thirty or forty workmen surrounded Gulick. Then the cry was raised, "Men, stand by your chief!" and in a twinkling the assailants were quickly routed and took refuge in the gas house at the corner of Centre and Hester Streets. Gulick, by almost superhuman efforts, got into the gas house first, to prevent the excited men from entering. Amid volleys of coal buckets he called upon the rioters inside to behave themselves and they should be protected. He was replied to by being rushed at with a red hot poker; but, fortunately, his trumpet was under his arm, with its large bowl in front of him, through which the hot poker passed. He jumped from the stoop, crying in stentorian tones: "Now, men, surround the house; don't let

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one of them escape!" They were all, or nearly all, arrested and locked up after receiving a sound drubbing. The firemen got very excited, and it seemed that a big riot would ensue. They rushed into the gas house and attempted to destroy the machinery, and a dreadful explosion was eminent. But the chief's firmness prevailed, and in a short time he quieted the men and restored peace.

It is proper that we should now devote a chapter to the means by which the fire fiend is to be fought. Without a good supply of water the finest engines and the highest estate of discipline are almost useless to stay the progress of a fire. The water supply of a city is as great an essential as its drainage, and more so than its arrangement of streets or its lighting. To this subject the ancients have devoted their best energies, and the remains of the gigantic waterworks of old Rome attest the truth of the assertion. Hence, we propose to treat, as fully as the scope of this work will allow, the water



BURNING OF BARNUM'S MUSEUM, BROADWAY AND ANN STREET, JULY 13, 1865

supply of New York. It is a natural sequence of the history of fires and will properly precede a sketch of the volunteer fire companies.

At a very early day the want of a sufficient supply and a convenient distribution of good water was felt by the citizens of New York. Before the Declaration of Independence considerable expenditures had been made in order to satisfy this want. At first wells were the only source of supply. There were no public wells before the year 1658, the inhabitants previous to that time having been supplied by private wells within their own inclosures. The first public well constructed (1658) was in front of the fort. It does not appear that any other wells were sunk in the streets until 1677, at which time an

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order was promulgated that "wells be made in the following places by the inhabitants of the streets where they are severally made," viz:

One opposite Roelof Jansen, the butcher.

One in Broadway, opposite Van Dyck's.

One in the street, opposite Derick Smith's.

One in the street, opposite John Cavalier's.

One in the yard of the City Hall.

One in the street, opposite Cornelius Van Boroum's.

In 1687 seven other public wells were ordered in different streets, for the purpose of defraying the expenses of which the respective premises were assessed; and in the same year the city government undertook to pay one-half the expense, and the neighbors the other half. Public wells, during the earlier part of the last century, were constructed by a contribution of £8 by the government, and the remaining portion was defrayed by the inhabitants residing in the neighborhood. No person was allowed the use of a well until he had contributed a fair proportion of the cost. About the year 1750 pumps came into use, and a general act was afterwards passed to enable the city to raise a tax for the construction and keeping in repair of the public wells and pumps.

About the year 1690 there were, say, a dozen public wells in the city, standing all of them in the middle of the streets. In 1748 there were many wells, but a portion of the inhabitants preferred to send "out of town" to the Fresh-water Spring, then and for a long period afterwards known as the Tea-water Spring. This Spring was situated near the present junction of Chatham and Roosevelt Streets. Shortly before the Revolution the neighborhood of the spring was made into a fashionable place of resort at which to procure beverages mixed with pure water. A pump was erected over the famous spring, ornamented grounds were laid out around it, and the "Tea-water Pump Garden" held forth its attractions under the most seductive influences. The water of all the other wells and pumps (and there were many scattered over the city) was almost unfit for use.

Before the introduction of the Croton, water was one of the chief commodities for barter in the city. It was delivered by contract as ice now is, or hawked through the streets at a cent or a cent and a half a pail. In some houses this was an important item of expense. Sixty years ago Mr. Davis, of the "Grapevine," in Greenwich Avenue, had an establishment at Beekman and South Streets. He was furnished with forty gallons of water a day from the old spring in Franklin Square, and his bill was thirty shillings a week, or one hundred and ninety-five dollars a year. But Knapp's tea-water, drawn from a spring close by the old White Fort, was the most popular in the olden time, and gave employment to a great many men who made a good living by it. Among these was Mr. Sweeney, the founder of Sweeney's Hotel, who was in former times a waterman. Knapp's famous spring was probably not over six hundred feet from high water mark, and was located on Tenth Avenue, near Fourteenth Street. The Ninth Ward was favored with a number of good springs. Going through Thirteenth Street there was a well where Tracy & Russell's brewery afterward stood. A little further up, at Christopher Street and Sixth Avenue, there was another tea-well which was largely patronized. There were large numbers of wells sunk by the city which were public, but Knapp's Spring and the spring in Christopher Street, having obtained a name, had a large patronage from those who could afford to pay for the water.

In 1790 the tea-water pumps became an important aid in extinguishing fires in the vicinity. The other wells in the lower part of the city furnished only a miserable and brackish substitute for water. But here, night or day, there bubbled up continuously a strong stream of pure cold water, like the joy of the firemen and the traveler.

In July, 1774, the proposal of Christopher Colles to erect a reservoir and to convey water through the several streets of the city was accepted by the Common Council. Mr. Colles's scheme was simply that of the Manhattan Company—to dig large wells, and from them to pump water into reservoirs.

To no single individual is the system of American improvements more indebted than to Christopher Colles. Born in Ireland in the year 1738, he first appears in this country in 1772, as a lecturer upon pneumatics, illustrated by experiments in an air-pump of his own invention. He is also said to have been the first in this country to

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undertake the building of a steam engine. In 1773 he lectured in this city on the advantage of lock navigation, and one year later he proposed the erection of a reservoir, and the laying down of a system of conduit pipes. With the aid of the corporation a steam pumping engine was erected near the Collect Pond. The engine carried a pump eleven inches in diameter and six feet stroke, which lifted four hundred and seventeen thousand six hundred gallons daily. The war of the Revolution caused an abandonment of this plan.

All the authorities concur in giving to Colles the credit of having been not only the first to propose, but the first to bring before the public, in a practical form, the feasibility and vast national advantage of a system of water communication which should unite the great lakes and their boundless tributary territory with the Atlantic ocean. This distinguished citizen was also the first (in 1812) to make "formal public proposal for telegraphic intercourse along the whole American coast, from Passamaquoddy to New Orleans." A semaphoric telegraph was established to signalize intelligence between New York and Sandy Hook, which for many years was under his personal direction. He died in this city on the fourth day of October, 1816, in the seventy-ninth year of his age, and was buried in St. Paul's Cemetery.

The ground selected to carry out Mr. Colles's scheme was on the east line of Broadway, between Pearl and White Streets, where a spacious reservoir was constructed. On August 8, 1774, the Aldermen passed the following resolution:

Ordered, That the northerly part of the property of Augustus Van Cortlandt and Frederick Van Cortlandt, fronting on Great George Street, be purchased at six hundred pounds per acre for a reservoir, provided that upon sinking a well there good water be found. If not, the well to be filled up by the corporation.

The water proved satisfactory, and treasury notes to the amount of two thousand five hundred pounds were ordered to be issued to meet the expenses. Subsequently other proposals were made, and in 1798 it was found necessary to look outside the city for a sufficient supply of water, and the Bronx River was mentioned. The yellow fever, which had made great ravages, was said to have been aggravated by the scarcity of good water. Dr. Brown, in his report to the Common Council, underrated the quantity needed. He considered three hundred and sixty-two thousand eight hundred gallons as an ample daily supply, and two hundred thousand dollars as the utmost expenditure required for bringing the Bronx to the city, for laying down twenty miles of pipes in the streets, and erecting two public fountains. The water was to be elevated eighty feet above the level of Harlem River; the machinery for the purpose was to be propelled by the surplus water from the Bronx, which was estimated to discharge one thousand two hundred cubic feet, or seven thousand four hundred ale gallons per minute. A Mr. Western, however, estimated that the city would require three million gallons per day.

Up to the year 1816, no serious effort was made to supply the city with a sufficiency of good water. Then the matter was thoroughly discussed, and in August of 1819, Robert Macomb asked permission of the corporation to furnish the city with water. After many inquiries and experiments the first positive step towards something like action on the part of the corporation was taken on the recommendation of the Fire Department in 1829. A report made by Alderman Samuel Stevens in favor of the establishment of a well and reservoir in Fourteenth Street, where water might be distributed, was accepted and favorably acted upon. It was the beginning of the noble Croton Aqueduct.

New York was about this time experiencing one of its characteristic "building booms," and was growing with unprecedented rapidity away and beyond the public improvements so necessary for the convenience and welfare of its inhabitants, for although the natural advantages of New York in other respects were not excelled, nor perhaps equalled, by any other city in the world, yet it must be admitted that the supply of water for household purposes and for the extinguishment of fire, was in 1829, very meagre. Various schemes had been adopted for bringing water into the city, but none had as yet complied with the main objects of their charters, so far as the public was concerned, and it was found that similar incorporations of private individuals for the purpose of furnishing water to the city, was productive only of the same results, and the prospects



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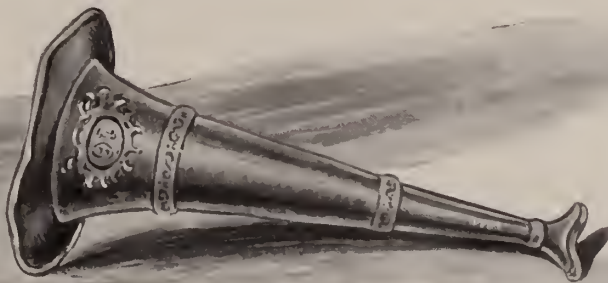
New York

of securing an adequate supply of water for the city's uses seemed as far from realization as ever.

The Fire Department took a very active part in the agitation of this very vital issue, for many destructive fires that took place on or about this period, and the remarkably rapid advance in building operations, which was going on at the rate of sixteen hundred to eighteen hundred houses a year, made the firemen painfully aware of the great fire-peril the city was constantly facing with no available sources of water for fire purposes other than the public cisterns, the various wells scattered throughout the city and the two rivers, the latter seldom if ever near the fires. It must also be understood that the importance of obtaining a plentiful supply of pure and wholesome water for the city had features other than its necessity for fire uses that made it an issue of considerable moment, for in looking to future events connected with its commercial and domestic prospects the fact was not lost sight of that sister cities of other States were entering into competition with a zeal and enterprise which rendered them formidable but not unworthy rivals. Philadelphia and Baltimore by the completion of their various works of internal communication, were already attracting a considerable portion of valuable trade of the West, and it was necessary for the people of New York to consider what steps were required to secure their position upon an equality with those enterprising cities.

This was the condition of affairs on the Island of Manhattan in the year 1830. Public improvements which were started during that year, and which were being carried on rapidly, were generally of a character to produce permanent advantages both of safety and convenience to the inhabitants. The construction of pumps and wells throughout the city was continued with unabated energy and the question of obtaining a reliable and adequate supply of pure water was receiving the most serious attention.

Broadway was built up nearly to Union Square; on the west side of the island the city proper was verging almost to Greenwich Village, which had expanded into a large and well-built suburban ward; while eastward, from the Bowery, many settlements were springing up quite beyond the compact part of the city. Real estate values were increasing at a wonderful rate and the shipping interests were advancing in a like ratio and those who had studied the commercial possibilities of the city began to realize that New York was soon to become the Queen City of the East—a great business centre whose reputation for industry and enterprise would circle the entire world and gain for it the title it was destined to bear in later years—that of the Empire City of the whole United States.



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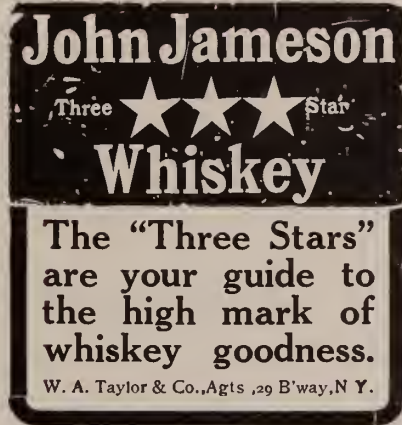
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